BUDDHA NATURE:

A Festschrift in Honor of Minoru Kiyota

Edited by
Paul J. Griffiths and John P. Keenan



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ISBN 0-914910-77-99

Printed by Kenkyusha Printed Co.
Tokyo, Japan

CONTENTS

Preface: The Making of a Modern Buddhologist

Paul J. Griffiths and John P. Keenan

A festschrift is undertaken not merely as a work of scholarship, but also as an act of gratitude. In its pages clear and logical thinking abounds; at least that is the intention. But in the background of such an endeavor, feelings and emotions drive the project forward. The canons of academic rigor at times obscure these behind-the-scenes emotions, suggesting that a life can be summarized by a publication list. We are reminded of the sad complaint of John Wainright in John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany*—that his life consisted merely in a reading list. But that is a delusion, and although the purpose of this volume is to present a collection of scholarly studies on the theme of Buddha Nature, we would like to emphasize in these prefatory remarks that it was inspired first of all by our personal sense of gratitude to Professor Minoru Kiyota, a truly engaged human being who also happens to concern himself with Buddhist scholarship.

The first of the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha Śākyamuni is that all living entails suffering. Each and every human being is faced with harsh realities and encounters adverse situations. Professor Kiyota's early life had more than its share of such situations. But, in the teaching of Śākyamuni, one does not simply admit the reality of such hardships and sufferings. The Second Noble Truth enjoins on us the insight that there is a pattern to our sufferings, an insight which enables us to reverse the pattern (if not the actual suffering itself) and attain cessation, the theme of the Third Noble Truth. The success of a life comes not from circumstances encountered, but from how one reacts to them, from how deeply one can understand their pattern and respond to them with intelligence and wisdom. The course of Professor Kiyota's life and career shows, by and large, an ability to

respond with intelligence, an intelligence that shades into wisdom. It is not, however, enough merely to understand. Practice is enjoined by the Fourth Noble Truth. That practice for Professor Kiyota has been the practice of scholarship and teaching, enriched more recently by his renewed engagement in kendō, the art of swordsmanship. The realities he has encountered, his understanding of them, and the practical engagements that have flowed from those understandings allow us to provide, with very broad brush strokes, a portrait of an engaged scholar and practitioner.

Minoru Kiyota was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1923 of Japanese immigrant parents. His family, like many such immigrant families, struggled to make their way in their new environment while trying to maintain contact with the Japanese culture they had left behind. Professor Kiyota went to grammar schools both in San Francisco and in Yokohama, where he lived for a period with his grandparents, attending the neighborhood school. It was during those early days that he first became engaged in the practice of kendō—in San Francisco in the Nakanishi branch of the Onoha Ittoryu, under the direction of Hiromasa Takano, the son of famed Meiji kendō practitioner Sasaburo Takano. In subsequent years, the press of scholarly and academic affairs would at times preclude this practice, but the seeds were planted, and many years later Professor Kiyota would again take up kendō. At present he not only teaches Buddhism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but also offers a course in the Department of Physical Education entitled "Integration of the Martial and Liberal Arts," and he directs the University of Wisconsin's Kendō Club.

America is a country of immigrants, but the onset of World War II shattered the pattern of gradual assimilation and enculturation not only for the Kiyota family but for all Japanese-Americans. In a history now often told and officially regretted, Japanese-Americans, even those with legal status as citizens of the United States, were regarded as disloyal and untrustworthy, dispossessed of their property, and "relocated" to camps in the Western areas of this country. From May 1942 until March 1946, Professor Kiyota would be incarcerated in such relocation camps.

Professor Kiyota's response was one of resistance. Active resistance was futile, for he and his family were forcibly relocated and imprisoned in the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. But no such strictures demanded internal consent. And so he refused to sign the loyalty oath which the American Government demanded of all internees. With a sense of irony, he agreed that he would sign immediately upon being released from the camps. His resistance extended to a symbolic renunciation of his American citizenship during a camp demonstration against the violation of the human rights of the internees. In the Catch-22 logic of the times, that classified him in the minds of the authorities as even more dangerous, and he was removed to the more heavily guarded Tule Lake Segregation Center in Arizona, from which he was finally released only some six months after the war had ended.

After release, Professor Kiyota enrolled at the University of California-Berkeley, from which he graduated in 1949. He then briefly went to work for Hicks Department store in Washington, D.C. The traditional culture of Japanese-Americans inculcated an ethic of hard work, and, by adhering to that ethic, Professor Kiyota earned promotions from his immediate supervisor in the com-

pany. But one day he was called into the office of the personnel manager and informed that, although he had earned a managerial position in the company, he would not be given the position because the other employees would not accept working under a Japanese. In anger and frustration, Professor Kiyota turned and walked out of that company, slamming the door so hard that he could hear the sound of breaking glass behind him.

A young man in his twenties with no firm plan for the future needs to choose a direction. So Professor Kiyota volunteered to serve in the Air Force and was hired as a civilian employee attached to Air Force Intelligence. His status remained civilian because of the nature of the intelligence work, taking him at times beyond the 38th parallel into North Korea. He was not motivated, he reports, by strong feelings of patriotism—especially after Topaz and Tule Lake. Rather, he joined because he was "young, stupid, and wanted the extra money" to pursue his future, for he had conceived the idea of going to Japan to study Buddhism. He served from 1950 to 1954, managing South Korean agents who attempted to infiltrate into North Korea and interrogating North Korean agents who had been captured doing the same in the South. At times he went to Tokyo to interrogate Japanese POWs who had returned from confinement in Siberia. During his time in Tokyo he met and married his wife Nora, then Noriko Motoyoshi, who had studied in Tokyo to become an ophthalmologist. Of course, when he signed on with the Air Force, he had failed to mention both his prior refusal to sign the loyalty oath while in the internment camps, and his symbolic renunciation of U.S. citizenship as a protest against incarceration at that time. During one of his stays in Tokyo, however, the Air Force learned of these events and fired him. They also kept his passport.

Professor Kiyota then found himself stranded in Tokyo, unable to return to the USA because of the lack of a passport. Some might have spent all their time protesting the injustice of the situation. Professor Kiyota instead took the opportunity to realize a dream conceived a few years earlier and enrolled in the Department of Indian Philosophy at the University of Tokyo to study Buddhism. He spent the next six years engrossed in the study of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist history and texts, under the direction of Professors Reimon Yuki and Shinsho Hanayama. Tokyo University at that time was among the best places in the world to study Buddhism; his professors included some of the most famous Buddhologists of the time: Hajime Nakamura, Akira Hirakawa, and Koshiro Tamaki. He received his M.A. in 1958 and his Ph.D. in 1963. In due time, his American passport was restored and return to the United States became possible.

Kiyota returned to San Francisco, where Attorney Wayne Collins of the ACLU successfully fought in court for the restoration of his United States citizenship. Meanwhile, Richard H. Robinson was establishing the nation's first Buddhist Studies program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Robinson was skilled in Indian thought in general, and Buddhism in particular. Professors Hajime Nakamura of the University of Tokyo and Joseph Kitagawa of the University of Chicago, who had met Kiyota in Japan, recommended him to Robinson for the position in East Asian Buddhism, and he was hired in 1962.

It has been at the University of Wisconsin that since 1962, Professor Kiyota has pursued his scholarship and teaching. His research has been multifaceted, with the twin focuses being Sino-Japanese Esoteric Buddhism (especially Shingon), and the so-called "new religions" of Japan, especially Gedatsukai. He has had a continuing interest in the history of Japanese Buddhism in general. More recently he has become engaged in examining the Buddhist doctrinal context for the practice of kendō, both as a scholar and as a practitioner, and in the more general question of the relationship between Japanese martial arts and Buddhism. Underlying all this is a concern with the relationships between abstract theory and religious practice in Buddhism: three of his books mention this in their subtitles, and those who have been his students remember his unceasing emphasis upon this issue as a proper framework for research.

At least as important as his research and publications (a partial list of which is appended to this preface) has been Professor Kiyota's teaching. He has acted as advisor for more than twenty Ph.D. dissertations in Buddhist Studies during his tenure at the University of Wisconsin—probably more than any other single scholar in the field. He has acted as mentor to graduate students from the United States, Europe, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, and has directed dissertations in fields ranging from the technicalities of Abhidharma philosophy to the obscurities of theorizing about Buddha Nature. The contributors to this festschrift focus on the latter issue, and in all their work they are indebted to Professor Kiyota's teaching and research.

His concern with intercultural exchange and understanding between Japan and the United States has also been evident. Professor Kiyota is well known not only in Western circles of Buddhist Studies, but also in the much larger and more developed field of Japanese Buddhist studies. Most of his students have had the opportunity to study in some of the best Japanese universities under the direction of eminent Japanese scholars, through contacts Professor Kiyota has maintained in Japanese academic circles. He has also worked hard to bring about two unique Japan-US scholarly conferences. The first, held in 1985, treated Japanese Buddhism, and resulted in the volume of that name listed in the bibliography. The other, held in 1989, thematized Japanese Martial Arts and American Sports, and is reported on in the volume of that name. These two conferences were unique in bringing together and facilitating significant communication between Japanese and American scholars and—in the case of the second conference—Buddhism scholars from both countries with practitioners of martial arts and other sports.

Professor Kiyota's newest book, written and published in Japanese, is entitled *A Japanese-American Rebel Youth: A Record of Human Rights Violation and Oppression*. It marks a departure from his more scholarly endeavors, for this work is an historical novel based on the events of a life which both encountered much suffering and overcame it.

Minoru Kiyota's Major Publications

Books

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Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice. Honolulu, 1978. (Editor, with Elvin W. Jones)
Gedatsukai: Its Theory and Practice (A Study of a Shinto-Buddhist Syncretic School in Contemporary Japan). Los Angeles & Tokyo, 1982.
Tantric Concept of Bodhicitta: A Buddhist Experiential Philosophy. Madison, Wisconsin, 1982.
Japanese Buddhism: Its Tradition, New Religions and Interaction with Christianity. Los Angeles & Tokyo, 1987. (Editor, with Byron Earhart, James Heisig, and Paul J. Griffiths).
Japanese Martial Arts and American Sports: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Means to Personal Growth. Tokyo, 1990. (Editor, with Hideaki Kinoshita)
Nikkei hangyakuji: Amerika ni okeru minken jūrin to hakugai no kiroku. Tokyo, 1990.

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"Japan's New Religions (1945-65): Secularization or Spiritualization?" In *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhism*, edited by Leslie Kawamura (Waterloo, Canada, 1981), 193-222.
"*Mahāvairocanasūtra*: An Annotated Translation." In *Daijo Bukkyō kara Mikkyō* [A Festschrift for Katsumata Junkyo] (Tokyo, 1981), 17-43.
"Tathāgatagarbha Thought: A Buddhist Experiential Philosophy." *Bulletin of the Cultural Research and Educational System Research Institute* [A Festschrift for Furuta Shokin] (Tokyo, 1981), 1-31.
"Faith, Wisdom and Practice as Essential Elements of Ekayāna: An Exposition Based on the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda* and *Shomangyōgishō*." In *Bukkyō to Bunka* [A Festschrift for Nakagawa Zenkyo] (Kyoto, 1982), 15-46.
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INTRODUCTION

Paul J. Griffiths and John P. Keenan

The belief that all sentient beings have Buddha Nature has encouraged many Buddhist practitioners to redouble their commitment, assured that reaching personal awakening is not only possible in this vale of tears, but that somehow awakening can be realized here and now in one's own environment.

The term 'Buddha Nature', however, is not of ancient lineage. It comes from the Chinese tradition where it indicates the true, if unrecognized, reality of our human nature. The Chinese ideograph for 'nature', *hsing*, is composed of two elements that signify 'the mind or heart with which one is born'. Discussions about human nature have a long and honored tradition in Chinese philosophy, from the earliest discussions of Chou times right down to the present. Opinions abounded and arguments proliferated. It is not clear how K'ung-tzu evaluated human nature, but Meng-tzu clearly opted for its intrinsic goodness, while Hsun-tzu declared it to be evil.[1] The Buddhist affirmation that the original nature of all beings is Buddha Nature clearly drew upon this Chinese background and corrected it in light of Indian Buddhist doctrine.

There is, however, no direct parallel in Indian Buddhism for the term 'Buddha Nature', and, where it occurs in Chinese translations of Indic texts, we are often not sure which Sanskrit term(s) it represents. There are a number of possibilities: *buddhatā, tathāgatagarbha, tathatā, buddhadhātu, prakṛtivyavadāna*, and so forth. One of the most obvious among these is the doctrine of the Buddha seed or womb (*tathāgatagarbha*) within human beings. Another is that of the

1 For some discussion of this see Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford, 1969).

originally luminous (*prakṛtivyavadāna*) mind underlying the felt defilements of one's present existence.

One of the principal problems with the affirmation of the reality of Buddha Nature is that it apparently runs counter to the Mahāyāna doctrine that all beings are empty of any essence, any nature. This is why the Tibetan traditions, heavily influenced as they were by the Mādhyamika versions of the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), were less kind to Tathāgatagarbha doctrine, with its seeming affirmation of a substance beyond the scope of emptiness. But even the Tibetan schools did often thematize the inner luminosity of the mind, especially in connection with tantric practices.

By contrast, in the long history of Buddhism in India storytellers and intellectuals have always been interested in telling stories about what Buddha is like and, more abstractly, in describing and defining what it is to be Buddha, in listing its essential properties and analyzing its modes of action.[2] A battery of technical terms was developed by Indian Buddhist intellectuals to denote various aspects of Buddhahood, and an entire systematic theoretical discourse, with its own axioms, canons, genres, and styles of reasoning, was in place by the second century of the common era.

When regarded as the essential properties of the Buddha Śākyamuni, Buddhahood (*buddhatva* or *buddhatā*) was described by Abhidharma thinkers (and by Mahāyāna thinkers in their conventional discourse on awakening) as the distinguishing features of an awakened consciousness, i.e., that which distinguishes the consciousness of a Buddha from ordinary human consciousness. From this perspective, while theoretically the possibility of any sentient being becoming Buddha remains open, in practice this rarely occurs. The affective and conative depravities and the bad cognitive habits of most sentient beings are thought to be so great that their attainment of Buddhahood is almost unimaginable. If, in some particular case, Buddhahood is attained, this will happen only after an aeons-long unremitting struggle to pass gradually (*krameṇa*) through the stages of a complex and demanding path of religious training. Failure is more likely than success, and success will come only after vast numbers of lives have passed. This doctrinal option stresses the difference between the realized Buddha and deluded sentient beings.

A contrasting option minimizes the difference between a fully-realized Buddha, an *anuttarasamyaksaṃbuddha*, and all other sentient beings.[3] The nature

2 See Paul J. Griffiths, "Buddha and God: A Contrastive Study in Ideas About Maximal Greatness," *Journal of Religion* 69/4 (1989), 502-529.

3 This assertion of identity appears to have gone as far, in the minds of some Buddhist theorists, as the claim that all sentient beings possess the thirty-two physical marks of a *mahāpuruṣa*, those marks that were traditionally taken to be attributes only of the *nirmāṇakāya* (and, according to some traditions, of the *saṃbhogakāya*) of a Buddha (a similar set of marks appears also on the body of a *cakravartin*). On these marks see Paul J. Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening: A Study and Translation of Chapter Ten of Asaṅga's Mahāyāna-saṅgraha* (New York, 1989), 145-149. On this point, and for other useful methodological points, see David S. Ruegg, *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London, 1989), 17-55.

of each human being is the same as the Buddha's nature, and so the need for a complex and graded set of rules governing the stages of religious training (*śikṣāpada*) instituted to transform that nature is reduced to the point of invisibility. Correspondingly, the distinction between the virtuoso and the nonvirtuoso becomes less important, gradualism is replaced by subitism, activism by quietism, intellectual system-building by a dramatized aesthetic—and so forth.

Another approach refuses to define Buddha Nature as any kind of essence. It is not a goal to be attained, and so parallels drawn from the similarity or dissimilarity of human nature to Buddha Nature are meaningless. Perhaps the prime example of this approach is that of the Japanese Zen master Dōgen, who developed his understanding from an initial questioning about the meaning of Buddha Nature. For him, Buddha Nature was neither a future state to be achieved, nor an already attained inner reality. Rather, awakening itself consisted in existential practice, a possibility always open at any moment and realized only in present moments.

These discussions on Buddha Nature have gone on for centuries. The offerings in this volume do not pretend to cover the field or to represent the full range of ideas about Buddha Nature; they are merely the efforts of a number of men and women to think about this most important Buddhist theme from their several different vantage points.

José Ignacio Cabezón, in "The Canonization of Philosophy", explores the rhetoric used by Tibetan scholiasts—especially dGe lugs pas—to establish philosophical canonicity. He argues that the construction of hierarchically ordered tenet (*siddhānta/grub mtha'*) systems is precisely an attempt to provide a philosophical canon, and that this can be seen most clearly in the way that the constructors of such systems deal with controverted questions. The question of whether living beings possess an intrinsically pure Buddha Nature is, for Cabezón's scholiasts, just such a question. For some Jo nang pas this could be asserted as philosophically normative, whereas for most dGe lugs pas, if such a claim was made at all it was made only as a preliminary assertion, always of questionable adequacy. Cabezón explores in some detail the interesting case of the eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje, who appears to affirm the normative status of Buddha Nature claims, but who, in so doing, labels them 'Great Madhyamaka' (*dBu ma chen po*)—a rhetorical move in which a philosophical perspective clearly non-Madhyamaka is called such in an attempt to give it weight and authority.

For the Madhyamaka theorists, of course, both in India and Tibet, Buddha Nature thinking could not occupy the highest rung of the philosophical ladder. The apparently substantivist claims of Buddha Nature theorists—that there is an eternal, changeless, radiantly pure Buddha Nature—ran counter to the radically nonsubstantivist dialectical method of the Prāsaṅgikas, and Cabezón's study shows that, as a result of the dominance of the Prāsaṅgika in Tibet, Buddha Nature theory always remained marginal there and gained whatever position it had only by arrogating to itself the rhetoric of Madhyamaka.

Roger Gregory-Tashi Corless, in his essay "Lying to Tell the Truth", explores the use of intentional vagueness and obscurity in the texts of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and relates this to the intentional use of falsehood (or, perhaps better, nontruth) in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*. Both in second century

Alexandria and in third century India, he suggests, one finds a self-conscious use of graded, hierarchically ordered sets of "false truths" as pedagogical devices. For the *Lotus*, Corless suggests, the "true truth" is that all living beings are in fact possessors of Buddha Nature; it is this toward which the pedagogically useful though partial truths (*upāya*) found in other assertions point. This position is illustrated with extensive quotations from Kūkai, and is compared with positions taken by a series of Christian thinkers from Nicholas of Cusa to John Henry Newman.

Paul J. Griffiths, in his essay "Painting Space with Colors", focuses upon a single set of verses from a single Indian Buddhist text, a set in which there is an early and somewhat mysterious occurrence of the key term *tathāgatagarbha*. The text in question, the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra*, is usually categorized as belonging to the Yogâcāra school; the material discussed in this contribution suggests, among other things, that the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra* is in many respects close to (though considerably less explicit than) the *tathāgatagarbha* thought of such works as the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. The verses in question provide a series of fascinating tropes and metaphors centering upon the issue of the relationship between the *ground* of awakening, that which makes it possible, and the *fact* of awakening, its nature and essential properties.

This is the key issue in Buddha Nature thought; and while it can scarcely be said that the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra*-corpus resolves it, it can be said that the way in which it is treated in those verses reveals many of the conceptual resources possessed by the tradition for dealing with the problem. The text wants to affirm both that all beings are, or have, *tathāgatagarbha*, and that they also possess defilements which are, in some sense, real and that need to be removed by hard religious practice.

William G. Grosnick, in his essay "Buddha Nature as Myth", makes a distinction between "empirically verifiable propositions", statements that make claims about the nature of reality whose truth both is and is expected to be capable of clear articulation and demonstration, and "mythic views of reality" that provide a nonverifiable framework of great religious power for the expression of fundamentally important religious orientations. He then argues that Buddha Nature thought—at least as expressed in the early Indic sūtras devoted to it—is of the latter kind. Its function, he suggests, is to provide a mythic orientation toward the world and the religious potential of the individual Buddhist, and so to make the practice of Buddhism possible. It is just because "all beings universally possess Buddha Nature" that the practice of the path is possible.

Jamie Hubbard explores some specifically Chinese materials in his contribution "Perfect Buddhahood, Absolute Delusion—The Universal Buddha of the San-chieh-chiao". The San-chieh-chiao wanted to hold together a radically pessimistic view of the capacities of human persons for religious practice with a strong assertion of a fundamental identity between living beings and Buddha. The subtle scholastic discussion by the San-chieh-chiao of how these two affirmations were to be held together focused upon the theoretical question of the relations between pure, undefiled Suchness (*tathatā*) and the realm of ordinary living beings—for the assertion of a fundamental identity between the two cannot be allowed to call into question the pressing apparent reality of defilements in this

degenerate age. The central soteriological affirmation running through these discussions is that all beings will inevitably realize Buddhahood; the metaphysical problem is to show how this can be the case; and the practical problem is to delineate the kind of religious practice that is appropriate if it is the case. All these challenges the San-chieh-chiao attempted to meet, and it is the burden of Hubbard's careful exegesis to detail the subtle metaphysical and exegetical distinctions they constructed to do so.

Roger R. Jackson, in his essay "Luminous Mind Among the Logicians", treats the Indo-Tibetan commentarial discussions of the affirmation of the mind's natural luminosity (*prabhāsvaratā*) found in *Pramāṇavārttika* II.208. Such an affirmation, as he shows, has deep roots in the Buddhist tradition, and is usually connected with *tathāgatagarbha* thought. That it is also affirmed by Dharmakīrti and discussed extensively by his commentators in India and Tibet shows that it is not without significance for the logicoepistemological tradition represented by Dignāga and his successors. The idea that the mind is naturally luminous or radiant and that its defilements have only an adventitious status is of obvious relevance to Buddhist soteriology; it affirms that, in some important sense, the goal of Buddhist religious practice has already been attained or is already present. The importance of Jackson's study is that it shows the same idea to be relevant also to Buddhist epistemological theory: it is precisely the mind's natural radiance that makes apprehension of things as they really are a possibility. It is this metaphysical and epistemological fact which leads Jackson to categorize Dharmakīrti and his school as epistemological optimists.

John P. Keenan, in his essay on Paramārtha and Hui-K'ai, explores the complex process by which Indian Buddhist texts were transmitted into China, and argues for the pervasive influence, both linguistic and conceptual, of pre-Buddhist Taoist ideas upon that process. This influence, he argues, was essentially "centrist" in that Taoist thought then focused upon nonbeing as the source or matrix of being, and upon the importance of the "original nature" of human persons; such ideas were naturally conducive to an emphasis upon Tathāgatagarbha and Buddha Nature terms and concepts, for the interpretive tools for understanding them were already present in China, while this was not the case for Indian ideas about *śūnyatā* and the dialectic of the two truths.

To illustrate this general point Keenan considers the case of the translator Paramārtha and his amanuensis Hui-k'ai, and shows that in their work on Indic texts they not infrequently added references to *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature where no such mention was made in the originals; they thus contributed to the centrality of Buddha Nature thought in East Asian Buddhism.

Sallie B. King, in her essay "Buddha Nature Thought and Mysticism", offers a characterization of the phenomenon of mysticism and analyzes three Buddha Nature texts to see whether and to what extent the thought of those texts may properly be called 'mystical'. All three of the texts she discusses are extant only in Chinese. Two of them—the *Buddha Nature Treatise* (*Fo hsing lun*) and the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* (*Fo shuo wu shang i ching*)—are translations made by Paramārtha in the sixth century CE; and there is some question as to whether he may have actually composed them rather than simply translated them. The third,

the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*, was also translated into Chinese in the sixth century CE (by Bodhiruci), and there almost certainly was an Indic original for this text. Each of these texts belongs, more or less, to the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, but King wishes to classify only the *Buddha Nature Treatise* and the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* as properly mystical texts. The *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, she argues, endorses devotionalism rather than direct mystical experience for the practitioner; it cannot therefore be classified as a mystical text. King therefore distinguishes different threads or emphases within the Buddha Nature thought of the period with which she deals.

Heng-ching Shih, in her contribution, explores in some detail the T'ien-t'ai view of Buddha Nature, with a special focus on the question of evil. This is clearly a difficult issue for any philosophical school whose basic affirmation is that all living beings are naturally and originally pure and radiant: how, if this is true, can one account for the apparent existence of evil, the opposite or absence of this purity and radiance? Shih's chronological review of the development of the theory of "inherent evil" in T'ien-t'ai begins with the *Ta ch'eng chih-kuan fa men* which, in accord with the tradition, she judges to predate Chih-i himself, and then proceeds to an analysis of the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i*, a work that, again following tradition, she attributes to Chih-i. It is probably fair to say that the weight of contemporary historical-critical scholarship in both Japan and the West is against both this chronology and this attribution; Shih is, of course, aware of this, but judges the arguments against the traditional position to be inconclusive. The matter is complex, and the importance of Shih's paper lies not in this but rather in the substantive doctrinal analysis she provides of "inherent evil".

Buddha Nature, if it is truly universal and all-embracing, must embrace impurity; Buddha, indeed, must be capable of manifesting evil or impurity as an *upāya*, a proper teaching tool. Chih-i (or whoever wrote the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i*), through a virtuoso dialectical performance, makes the Buddha's possession of "inherent evil" a necessary basis for Buddha's compassionate action.

Paul L. Swanson's contribution, on Chih-i's threefold concept of Buddha Nature, places T'ien-t'ai thought on this matter in a broader conceptual context. He presents it as one more application of the fundamental T'ien-t'ai idea of synergy—that there is a deeply symbiotic relationship between the way things really are (reality), the awareness of the way things really are (wisdom), and the religious practice that produces such an awareness (practice). Swanson bases his exposition on the *Fa-hua hsüan-i*, in which Buddha Nature, along with nine other Buddhist concepts, is interpreted through the threefold pattern already adverted to. Swanson shows how Chih-i, drawing upon both the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*, accommodates Buddha Nature terminology and concepts into the structure of his own thought.

The Canonization of Philosophy and the Rhetoric of Siddhānta in Tibetan Buddhism

José Ignacio Cabezón

In a provocative essay entitled "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon"[1] Jonathan Z. Smith describes the process of self-limitation that occurs when a tradition comes to define for itself (and to define itself in terms of) a canon. There he states that "the radical and arbitrary reduction represented by the notion of canon and the ingenuity represented by the rule-governed exegetical enterprise of applying the canon to every dimension of human life is that most characteristic, persistent, and obsessive religious activity."[2] Perhaps the most important shortcoming of what is an otherwise masterful essay on the subject of religious canons and their interpretation is Smith's apparent lack of concern with the causal processes underlying the formation of canons and specifically with the social implications of the exclusion of texts or other religious elements from a canon. Contrary to Smith's claim, it has become quite clear, especially in the scholarship of the past decade, that the "reduction" involved in the process of canon-formation is never, as he suggests, "arbitrary". Instead, religious texts come to be considered canonical usually at the expense of other texts that are *consciously* excluded and thereby denied normative status. To say that the decision to exclude a particular work is conscious and not arbitrary is to point out that it is ideologically motivated (at times

1 In Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago, 1982).
2 Ibid., 43.

only implicitly so), that it arises within a specific historical and sociocultural context and, perhaps the most significant point, that it is an act of the religious hegemony.[3]

This question aside, seeing the canon as a predicament, i.e., as a tradition's self-imposed limitation, and viewing the exegetical enterprise as the means whereby a tradition extricates itself from this predicament, is indeed a provocative way of formulating the problematic of religious canons. In this essay I intend to employ Smith's notion as a springboard for discussing the Indo-Tibetan concept of *siddhānta* (Tibetan *grub mtha'*, literally 'tenet'), a concept that represents on the level of philosophical ideas this same process of self-limitation. I will maintain that the adoption of such a schema serves functionally to "canonize" philosophy in much the same way as the collection of accepted scriptural texts creates a norm for what is textually canonical. I shall also examine some of the rhetorical strategies involved in utilizing and upholding the validity of the *siddhānta* schema. In particular, in the latter part of the essay I will turn my attention to the exegesis of the Tibetan dGe lugs pa school and shall examine how this brand of Buddhist scholasticism deals with the problems that arise out of the self-limitation that occurs in the course of canonizing its philosophical tradition. As might be expected, the examples that best illustrate the unique dGe lugs pa exposition of *siddhānta* have to do with points of controversy, and among these some of the most controversial have to do with the theory of Buddha Nature. Hence, much of the material that we shall consider will in one way or another have to do with the notion of *tathāgatagarbha*.

In what follows I shall urge, first of all, that in the scholastic tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, especially in the literature of the dGe lugs pa sect, the *siddhānta* schematization served as a de facto canonization of Buddhist philosophy that came to define what was philosophically normative.[4] Secondly, I shall maintain that,

3 Some recent studies have dealt with the question of canonization in historical context, most recently Matthew Kapstein's excellent essay "The Purificatory Gem and its Cleansing: A Late Tibetan Polemical Discussion of Apocryphal Texts," *History of Religions* 28/3 (1989), 317-344 However, the fact that the canon is a sociocultural construct and the implications of this for the groups that have become marginalized by exclusion has, in the field of religious studies, with few exceptions been the exclusive insight of feminist criticism; and here it is primarily the works of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether that come to mind. The problematic of canons in its more sophisticated and complex form has been a focus of attention in a variety of other disciplines such as literary theory and sociology. See, for example, John Guillory, "Canonical and Non-Canonical: A Critique of the Current Debate," *English Literary History* 54 (1987), 483-527; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Claims of a Common Culture: Gender, Race, Class, and the Canon," *Salmagundi* 72 (1986), 131-143

4 I am here using the word "canon" in a broader Greek sense, referring to norms or standards rather than to a specific collection of texts. See Gerald T. Sheppard, "Canon," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York, 1987), II.62-67.

despite the fact that Tibetan exegetes have arrived at only a tentative consensus[5] as to the nature of the textual canons,[6] the determination of whether or not a doctrine was normatively Buddhist (and if so either provisionally or unequivocally true)[7] involved to a great extent a rhetoric that had as its basic presupposition the validity of the *siddhānta* schema. Put in another way, philosophical discourse (and particularly polemics) was based as much on the *siddhānta* classification scheme as it was on the physical canons, the collection of the "Buddha's word" and the commentarial literature whose creation it spurred. In many instances the *siddhānta* schema that formed the doctrinal or philosophical canon came to supersede the physical canon as the standard by comparison with which new ideas or texts came to achieve legitimacy.[8]

5 As Kapstein has recently shown ("Purificatory Gem") it is not clear to what extent a complete consensus was ever reached. Nevertheless, certain texts of the rNying ma pa school (selected *gter ma*) whose authenticity was questioned by the hegemonious dGe lugs pa school, were never incorporated into the rNying ma pa version of the Tibetan canon but continued to be studied by the rNying ma as a separate body of works ancillary to the canon itself. So, for several hundred years, all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism have held the *bka' 'gyur* and the *bstan 'gyur* in common as the de facto canon of Buddhism. On the Tibetan canon see Kenneth Ch'en, "The Tibetan Tripiṭaka," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 9 (1946-47), 53-62, and see the following note.

6 I use the term in the plural because it seems to me that besides the collection of scriptures that were considered to be the Buddha's actual words (*bka'*), known as the *bka' 'gyur*, the corpus of commentarial and ancillary treatises (*bstan bcos*) known as the *bstan 'gyur* achieved a canonical status far above the status of the equivalent texts in the West (this modulo Kapstein's recent claim that "large portions of such hallowed collections as the Tibetan *Tanjur* will have to be regarded as being in some sense extracanonical," where "few of the works and authors represented therein [were] generally thought to be so exalted as to be accorded the authoritative status otherwise reserved for works described as *buddhavacana*." ["Purificatory Gem," 219]). If there is one principle that seems to describe the process of canon formation in Tibet it seems to be that of "inclusion"; this is to say that it was considered far more important to err on the side of including marginally canonical material than on the side of failing to include a truly "canonical" work.

7 On the doctrines of provisional and definitive (*drang nges*) meaning see my, "The Concepts of Truth and Meaning in the Buddhist Scriptures," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 4/1 (1981), 7-23; and, *A Great Dose of Emptiness* (Albany, New York, forthcoming). In this latter an up-to-date bibliography on the subject is to be found.

8 Although this is not the place to pursue the point in detail it is worth mentioning in passing that much of Jürgen Habermas's work on "legitimation" in a social-scientific setting may, at least on the level of theory, be a fruitful methodological tool for approaching the issues under discussion here. In particular, his notion that the West has passed through certain distinct phases in which political institutions have achieved legitimacy in different ways makes one pause to wonder whether, in regard to religious texts, ideas, or institutions, such phases might be identifiable, and if so how they may compare crossculturally. See Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston, 1975), and "Legitimation Problems in the Modern State," in Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, 1979), 178-205. See also Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985), 358-386.

The Siddhānta Schema as Canon

In the present context the word *siddhānta* has two primary meanings. It can refer to the individual tenets of a specific philosophical school or to the hierarchical schema in which such tenets are used as the means for distinguishing one school from another, so that one school comes to be considered as ultimately superior to the rest.[9] Hence the fact that, according to the dGe lugs pa school, the claim that Buddha Nature refers to the emptiness of the mind of sentient beings is itself a *siddhānta*, insofar as it is a tenet of the Madhyamaka school. At the same time, the hierarchy of Buddhist philosophical schools in which the Madhyamaka is itself considered supreme is also known as *siddhānta*.

A detailed exposition of the *siddhānta* system as it arose in Tibet is beyond the scope of this study; it has, in any case, been undertaken by other scholars.[10] In brief, the basic principles of the schema are as follows. Religious systems are

9 In this sense it seems to me that there are considerable similarities between the *p'an-chiao* hermeneutic of Chinese Buddhism and the *siddhānta* schema of Tibet. In fact, one might almost argue that *siddhānta*, much more than the *neyārtha/nītārtha* distinction, is the functional equivalent of *p'an-chiao*; this despite recent polemics to the contrary. See: Allan Andrews, "Pure Land Hermeneutics: Hōnen's Interpretation of Nembutsu," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10/2 (1987), 7-25; Peter N. Gregory, "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics: The Case of Hua-yen," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (1983), 231-249; Robert A. F. Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46 (1978), 19-39; idem, "Vajra Hermeneutics," in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Honolulu, 1988), 119-148.

10 An excellent introduction to the subject is to be found in one of the elementary textbooks on it, dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po's (1728-81) *Grub mtha' rin chen 'phreng ba*. There are two very different translations of this work into English: Herbert V. Guenther, *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley, 1971); Geshe Lhundup Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (London, 1976). Jeffrey Hopkins' *Meditation on Emptiness* (London, 1983) contains a translation of the Prāsaṅgika chapter of one of the most extensive of the *siddhānta* texts, 'Jam dbyang bzhad pa's *Grub mtha' chen mo*. Other chapters of a similar text by lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje (1717-1786) have been translated by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., in his *A Study of Svātantrika* (Ithaca, New York, 1987), and by Anne C. Klein in her *Knowing, Naming and Negation* (Ithaca, New York, 1989). We shall discuss in the conclusion how in later times this same method of "canonizing" ideology came to be applied to the different sects of Tibetan Buddhism themselves, now with an historical flair, in the masterful work of Thu'u kvan bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, the *Grub mtha' shel kyi me long*. The *bLo gsal grub mtha'* has been worked on extensively by Mimaki Katsumi. See his *bLo gsal grub mtha'* (Kyoto, 1982), and "The *bLo gsal grub mtha'* and the Mādhyamika Classification in Tibetan grub mtha' Literature," in *Contributions on Tibetan and Buddhist Religion and Philosophy*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner and Helmut Tauscher (Vienna, 1983), 161-168. See also David S. Ruegg, "Autour de *lTa ba'i khyad par* de Ye shes sde," *Journal Asiatique* (1981), 208-229. A translation of one of the most recent and most extensive non-dGe lugs pa *siddhānta* texts is to be found in Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History* (London, 1990).

divided into two: Buddhist and non-Buddhist.[11] The former are in turn subdivided into four major schools, Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Yogâcāra (or Cittamātra) and Madhyamaka, schools that were distinguished from one another on the basis of their philosophical tenets. Each of these schools is then divided into further sub-schools. It should be realized, moreover, that the order of the schools in the schema is not arbitrary but is believed to represent an ascending hierarchy of successively more subtle and accurate philosophical positions, positions that, according to most Tibetan exegetes, culminate in the views of the Madhyamaka school. In the words of one late Indian scholastic and yogin, Maitrīpa, "the best are Mādhyamikas" (*rab ni dbu ma pa'o*).[12] Since this is accepted almost universally in Tibet,[13] it hardly needs to be pointed out that most of the different sects of Tibetan Buddhism considered themselves to be of the Mādhyamika persuasion, despite the fact that they often differed so much on what this meant. This, then, becomes the normative descriptive vantage point from which the other schools are characterized.

David Seyfort Ruegg and Paul M. Williams, among others, have pointed out that the distinction between the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika branches of the Mādhyamikas was not fully made until the latter spread (*phyi dar*) of the dharma in Tibet.[14] It was during this time, i.e., after the tenth century, that the Prāsaṅgika

11 In his *Grub mtha' kun shes* (45-47), sTag tshang lo tsa ba Shes rab rin chen (b. 1405) gives an extensive explanation of what distinguishes Buddhists from non-Buddhists and concludes that it involves not only philosophical viewpoint (*lta ba*) but conduct (*spyod pa*) and meditational practice (*sgom*) as well. A similar position is taken by Śākya mchog ldan (1428-1507) in his work *dBu ma'i byung tshul rnam par bshad pa'i gtan yid bzhin lhun pa*; although this text is not labelled *siddhānta*, it is very much structured along these lines (it is preserved in the *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, compiled by bSod rnams rgya mtsho). Here Śākya mchog ldan says: "What is the difference between outsiders and followers of the dharma? It is that the former abide in extreme views while the latter abide in the middle way. It is that the former are attached to external actions while the latter are engaged in inner ones." (*dBu ma'i byung tshul*, 211).

12 Mark Tatz, unpublished edition and translation of Maitrīpa's *Tattvaratnāvalī*, 8.

13 An exception, about which more will be said below, might be certain followers of the *gzhan stong* ("emptiness of what is other") tradition, such as the eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje, who seems to rely predominantly on the works of Maitreya and Asaṅga. In his *dBu ma gzhan stong smra ba'i srol* he states that "it is necessary to base this system on the quintessential instructions of the Lord Maitreya" (fol. 5b). Still, it is notable that he calls his system the "Great Madhyamaka". Hence, although he may depart from the norm in regarding as supreme what other scholars consider to be Yogâcāra works, and though his doctrines may themselves be nonstandard, at least from most *gsar ma* perspectives, he never gives up the structure of the *siddhānta* schema. The highest position is still referred to as the Madhyamaka, despite the fact that it is clear, both from his sources and from his doctrinal stance, that what he is advocating is actually closer to what the majority of scholars would call Yogâcāra. Śākya mchog ldan, also a *gzhan stong pa*, takes this same tack in his *Autocommentary* to the *Shing rta srol chen gnyis las 'byung ba'i dBu ma chen po'i lugs gnyis rnam dbye*, 321-323, passim, but even he gives this same fourfold classification, despite the fact that what he subsumes under Madhyamaka is radically different from what most dGe lugs pas and Sa skyas would.

14 See David S. Ruegg, "On The Reception and Early History of the dBu ma (Madhyamaka) in Tibet," in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson*, ed. Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (New Delhi, 1980); Paul M. Williams, "Introduction—Some Random Reflections on the Study of Tibetan Madhyamaka," *Tibet Journal* 14/1 (1989), 1-9.

treatises rose to preeminence and superseded the Svātantrika as the normative interpretation of Madhyamaka doctrine in Tibet, although there also arose during this time a rival interpretation of the Madhyamaka known as the "emptiness of what is other" (*gzhan stong*), a doctrine expounded especially by a school known as the Jo nang pas.[15] Especially since the persecution of the this school by the fifth Dalai Lama, however, the *gzhan stong* doctrine waned considerably as a vital intellectual force in much of central and Western Tibet.[16] In those regions it was Candrakīrti's Prāsaṅgika that predominated, at least among those in power.

Those Tibetan exegetes who consider themselves Prāsaṅgikas maintain that every other Buddhist school falls into the extreme view of eternalism, which is of course a condemnation. According to the dGe lugs pa, and even much non-dGe lugs pa, *siddhānta* schematization, the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika schools, characterized as "Hīnayāna philosophical schools", are considered to be realist in their orientation in so far as they advocate the existence of an external world separate from the mind. The Yogâcāra school belongs to the Mahāyāna and is idealist, advocating that there is no such thing as a phenomenon *qua* external entity and that everything is of the same substance as the mind, which is, by contrast, itself considered to be a truly existing entity. This position is seen as falling short of the mark because it grants to certain phenomena, the mind preeminent among them, an ontological status that they do not have. The other major subschool of the Madhyamaka, the Svātantrika, though more subtle than the others, is said to fail in so far as it is unable to distinguish reality from a subtle but nonetheless defective kind of reification, something that we shall have more to say about in due course.

Although scholarship in the last several years has made it clear that the fully evolved *siddhānta* schema outlined above was something that did not develop until Buddhism was already well established in Tibet, this schematization, of course, has its roots in such Indian Buddhist works as the *Mahāprajñāpāramit[ôpadeśa]śāstra* attributed to Nāgārjuna (second century CE),[17] the *Tarkajvālā* of Bhāvaviveka

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15 For an introduction to some of the principles of the *gzhan stong* theory, see David S. Ruegg, "The Jo nang pas: A School of Buddhist Ontology According to the Grub mtha' shel gyi me long," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963), 73-91. See also Michael M. Broido, "The Jo-nang-pas on Madhyamaka: A Sketch," *Tibet Journal* 14/1 (1989), 86-90.

16 It did manage to have a major impact on Madhyamaka exegesis in Eastern Tibet, however. For an interesting example of a *siddhānta* text written from a *gzhan stong* perspective, see *'Jam dbyangs blo gros gzhan phan mtha' yas*, the *Phyi nang gi grub mtha' mdor bsdus su bkod pa 'Jam dgon zhal lung* and its commentaries by dKon mchog bstan 'dzin.

17 Extant only in Chinese, *Ta chih tu lun* (Taishō #1509). Partially translated into French by Étienne Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertue de la sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)* (5 vols., Louvain, 1944-81). Nāgārjuna's authorship has been disputed. See Nakamura Hajime, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Hirakata City, 1980), 239-240, and the extensive discussion in Lamotte, *Le traité*, III.v-xliv. The *Ta chih tu lun* mentions four *siddhāntas* (*laukika*, *prātipauruṣika*, *prātipakṣika* and *paramārthika*) in the context of discussing the two truths. See Iida Shotaro, *Reason and Emptiness: A Study in Logic and Mysticism* (Tokyo, 1980), 253.

(sixth century CE),[18] the *Tattvasaṅgraha* of Śāntarakṣita (eighth century CE),[19] the *Tattvaratnāvalī* of Maitrīpa (eleventh century CE),[20] and the *Vimalaprabhā*, a commentary on the Kālacakra Tantra.[21] It also shares certain similarities with such non-Buddhist Indian philosophical works as the *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha*, attributed to Mādhava (fourteenth century CE),[22] and with the *Sarvasiddhāntasaṅgraha*, attributed to Śaṅkara (eighth century CE).[23]

It is difficult to be sure what the original reasons for the development of such a categorization of doctrine were. In India, by the sixth century when we begin to see it actively employed, it seems to have the flavor of an explanatory strategy or a pedagogical tool. During this time Indian Buddhism was already becoming complex enough that a systematic approach to doctrine must have been welcome. The *siddhānta* schema was certainly this. On the one hand it provided for an exposition of diverse philosophical positions and texts, a sampling, as it were, of available doctrine. On the other hand it gave order to this mass of textual material, providing a framework for its understanding. In India, however, the schema, which seems to have been viewed more as an expedient than as a closed and complete system, never achieved the exalted status that it did in Tibet. Especially among the followers of the dGe lugs pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the *siddhānta* schema becomes the filter through which all doctrine must pass.

Just as the diverse Indian Buddhist scriptures *qua* texts come to be systematized in Tibet into a bicameral canon, the *bka' 'gyur* and the *bstan 'gyur*, the various doctrines become canonized into the fourfold schema already described. Just as the canon achieves closure, not permitting the admission of further texts, so too does the *siddhānta* schema achieve a kind of closure, disallowing the possibility

18 This is the name of Bhāvaviveka's autocommentary (*vṛtti*) on the *Madhyamakahṛdayakārikā*. Details of editions and translations (there is no complete translation into any European language) may be found in David S. Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosoph in India* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 62-63, 127-131.

19 This work, which survives in Sanskrit together with Kamalaśīla's commentary (*pañjikā*), has been edited by E. Krishnamacarya (Baroda, 1926) and translated by Gaṅganātha Jha, *The Tattvasaṃgraha of Śāntarakshita with the Commentary of Kamalashīla* (New Delhi, 1986).

20 The Tibetan text of this work has been edited and translated by Mark Tatz in a yet unpublished manuscript.

21 See, for example, chapter II section 7, entitled *Rang dang gzhan gyi lta ba mdor bsdus*, found in the Peking edition of the Tibetan Tripiṭaka, vol. 109, p. 307, fol. 3 and following.

22 This text has been edited, with an English translation, by E. B. Cowell and A. E. Gough, *The Sarva-Darśana-Saṃgraha, or Review of the Different Systems of Indian Philosophy* (London, 1882). Winternitz casts aspersions on Mādhava's authorship of the text; because of the fact that the text does not mention Rāmānuja, he speculates that it may be as early as the tenth or eleventh century. See Moritz Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature* (2 vols., Delhi, 1976), II.pt. 2, 486.

23 This text has been edited and translated by M. Rangacharya, *Sarvasiddhāntasaṃgraha* (Madras, 1909).

of new doctrine.[24] Just as polemics continue to exist about the physical canon, polemics concerning the status of certain texts called apocryphal and spurious by the religious hegemony,[25] so too do we find polemics in regard to the philosophical canon. Here, however, the rhetoric seems to be concerned more with the characterization of the existing schools of tenets, i.e., with the definitions and boundaries between one school and the next, than with the explicit admission of new elements into the *siddhānta* schema.[26] Hence, the isomorphism between texts and doctrines holds, for just as the canonicity of texts ultimately came down to the question of whether or not something was the word of the Buddha, the canonicity of a doctrine came down to the question of whether or not a particular text was the Buddha's ultimate intention (*mthar thug pa'i dgongs pa*).[27]

In making a case for the fact that the *siddhānta* schema was indeed a form of canonization, perhaps it is Jonathan Z. Smith's remark that is most to the point. If a canon is a tradition's self-imnposed limitation, one that is overcome through the

24 Closure in the *siddhānta* context implies that every truly Buddhist doctrine belongs to one of the identifiable Buddhist schools, which in turn are only four in number. Consider the remarks of sTag thsang lo tsa ba in his *Grub mtha' kun shes*, 102: "Some have maintained that there are five [schools], to wit, the Vātsīputrīya, the Vaibhāṣika, the Sautrāntika, the Cittamātra, and the Madhyamaka, while others have claimed that there are five by adding the advocates of the Tantra to the four schools (*siddhānta*), Vaibhāṣika etc. But this is not correct, for it has been stated [in the scriptures] that there is no fifth philosophical school in Buddhism. The *Kālacakra* and *Hevajra [Tantras]* etc. state that there are exactly four philosophical schools. The same point is made in the *Commentary on the Vajrahṛdaya (rDo rje snying 'grel)*. After stating that there are only three vehicles (Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, Tantrayāna) we find the passage 'In Buddhism there are only four. A fifth is not the Buddha's purport' ... Hence it is definite that our own philosophical system is divided into four, the Vaibhāṣikas etc." It is not clear whether sTag tshang means to imply that this last citation, the locus classicus for the view that there are four and only four Buddhist philosophical schools, is to be found in the *rDo rje snying 'grel*. Nor is it clear exactly which text this refers to. In general, the *rDo rje snying 'grel* is said to be a commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* from the viewpoint of the *Kālacakra* system. There is only one text in the bsTan 'gyur that bears a similar title, the *Vajramaṇḍalâlaṅkāramahātantrapañjikā* of Rab tu zhi ba'i bshes gnyen (sDe dge edition of the Tibetan Canon, Tōhoku #2515, rGyud 'grel I, foll. 313a-362a), where there is no mention of *siddhānta* at all.

25 As has been pointed out by both Matthew Kapstein and Paul Williams, the relationship of such questions to historical and sociopolitical events is not well understood. In my view, this is the next major step to be taken in the field of Tibetan intellectual history. See Kapstein, "Purificatory Gem," 237; Williams, "A Note on Some Aspects of Mi Bskyod Rdo Rje's Critique of Dge Lugs Pa Madhyamaka," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 11 (1983), 125-145.

26 It might be argued that the Jo nang pa doctrine of the emptiness of the other (*gzhan stong*) was such an element, but it must be remembered that the Jo nang pas themselves do not seem to challenge the validity of the fourfold *siddhānta* schema. Instead, they view this doctrine as the correct interpretation of the Madhyamaka, giving to it the title of "great Madhyamaka".

27 On the notion of intention see Michael M. Broido, "Intention and Suggestion in the Abhidharmakośa: Sandhabhāṣā Revisited," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 13 (1985), 327-381; David S. Ruegg, "Purport, Implicature and Presupposition: Sanskrit abhiprāya and Tibetan dgoṅs pa/dgoṅs gži as Hermeneutical Concepts," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 13 (1985), 309-325; idem, "An Indian Source for the Tibetan Hermeneutical Term Dgoṅs Gži," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16 (1988), 1-4.

interpreter's art, then the *siddhānta* schema must certainly be considered a form of canon, albeit a doctrinal or philosophical one. Especially in the literature of the dGe lugs pa sect, where speculation as to the nature of the schema is detailed and plentiful, both of Smith's criteria are clearly met. Time and again we find an opponent's viewpoint criticized for lying outside the fourfold structure; time and again we find that a text which would, on first inspection (and on a literal reading), seem to lie outside this schema,[28] is interpreted in such a way as to reconcile it with the schema, to make it fit into one of the four acceptable categories; and time and again we find that a text that, on a literal reading, might be more reasonably categorized as belonging to one of the other schools of tenets, is interpreted as a Prāsaṅgika work, making of it the Buddha's ultimate intention. Hence, philosophical rhetoric for those who presuppose the *siddhānta* schema is to a great extent geared toward demonstrating that the philosophical position of an opponent's text(s) or doctrine falls *outside* the fourfold schema, that the particular combination of tenets that characterizes one's own school falls *within* these parameters, i.e., within what is acceptable as philosophically normative, and finally that in the hierarchy of tenets one's own position corresponds to that of the highest school, whose view is identified as the Buddha's ultimate purport.[29]

The Limitations of the Philosophical Canon and the Nature of Exegesis

Having gotten themselves into the predicament of limiting valid Buddhist doctrine to the fourfold *siddhānta* schema, we find that the scholastics became extremely adept at interpreting their way out of this situation. In reality, of course, texts are more complex than the schema allows. Whereas *siddhānta* presupposes a certain uniformity to the textual tradition, the reality of the situation is that such uniformity is lacking. When generalizations can hardly be made about a single text (e.g., what

28 This by virtue of the fact that it espouses a combination of tenets that does not permit it to be classified as any single one of the *siddhānta* schools. Texts are, of course, extremely complex creatures whose uniformity is often questionable. When a single text can often be said to be multivocal in its philosophical views, how much more is this true of the different texts of a single author or of those of the authors of a single school? Still, the premise of the *siddhānta* schema is that there is sufficient uniformity in the textual tradition for all texts to be divisible into these four major categories, and that the guidelines that define these categories are nontrivial, which is to say that the implications of the fourfold division are philosophically interesting.

29 Of course, what it is that constitutes the Buddha's ultimate intention is a great source of controversy. Tsong kha pa, for example, seems to opt for characterizing it in terms of logical noncontradiction (see my "Concepts of Truth and Meaning"), but a perusal of Śākya mchog ldan's *dBu ma'i byung tshul* (e.g., 215-216) makes it quite clear that the association of Madhyamaka method with logic was just one of many approaches to the characterization of the reality that was considered the Buddha's final purport. See also Go ram pa bSod nams seng ge's *lTa ba'i shan 'byed theg mchog gnad gyi zla zer*, for a view that, although similar in its conclusions, does not share the *gzhan stong* presuppositions of the latter.

is the *siddhāntic* affiliation of the *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra*?) how much more problematic is it to attempt generalizations about entire families of philosophical literature? Hence a mechanism is needed to reconcile the reality of philosophical complexity with the inherent simplicity of the *siddhānta* schema. Exegesis is this mechanism. It is through exegesis that the philosophical stance of a text is "determined"[30] or constructed, and it is therefore through exegesis that a text is made to fall within a certain category of the *siddhānta* schema, thereby legitimizing it as normatively Buddhist and determining for it a philosophical home.[31] Finally, it is through exegesis that a text or doctrine comes to be hailed as belonging to the "Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka School," the code words of philosophical superiority.

As might be expected, much of the discourse related to *siddhānta* was polemical in nature. In Tibet in particular there was considerable disagreement over the nature of the schema itself, over which doctrines were inconsistent with it, over which doctrines and texts could be classified as belonging to one of the four schools, and over where those doctrines and texts that were included might fit into the schema. I shall devote the remainder of this paper to an examination of three types of philosophical rhetoric related to the *siddhānta* classification. The first is aimed at the invalidation of opponents' doctrines by demonstrating their incompatibility with *siddhānta* and hence with what is philosophically canonical. The second is aimed at demonstrating the validity of one's own system by demonstrating the coherence of one's own interpretation of the *siddhāntic* schema; this in turn was accomplished by comparing the physical or textual canon to one's own *siddhāntic* interpretation. Although the rhetorical strategies involved in this latter project are varied and disparate, the enterprise was, to a large extent, aimed at demonstrating the *siddhāntic* univocality and coherence of the doctrines espoused by some particular Buddhist text or texts, for a minimum requirement of a valid *siddhānta* schema seems to have been that each text have ultimately one and only one philosophical home. Finally, I shall examine a form of philosophical rhetoric devoted to demonstrating the uniqueness and superiority of one's own doctrine. This was accomplished, as has already been suggested, by associating the philosophical position of

30 I use the term loosely, for on the question of reading (i.e., interpreting) texts I must side with Stanley Fish when he says that "there is no single way of reading that is correct and natural," only "ways of reading that are extensions of community perspectives." Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980), 16.

31 The criteria involved in finding the *siddhāntic* home of a text are extremely complex and are discussed in some detail below. It is worth noting, however, one important factor that will not be discussed below: the perceived spiritual status of the author of a text. For example, anyone who is an ārya, who has a direct nonconceptual understanding of emptiness, must, by definition, uphold Prāsaṅgika tenets, for it is an implicit presupposition of the *siddhānta* schema we are dealing with here that the only ultimately valid exposition of emptiness is to be found in the works of this school. Now Asaṅga is "known", from scriptural evidence, to have been an ārya; hence, according to the dGe lugs pas, he must have been a Prāsaṅgika despite the fact that most of his philosophical writing is clearly Yogâcāra in tone. Given this presupposition, it is but a short step to read into some of his less normatively Cittamātra works (viz., the commentary on the *Uttaratantra* that is attributed to him) a Prāsaṅgika interpretation. Thus the perceived spiritual status of an author does have consequences as regards the determination of a *siddhāntic* home for his works.

one's own school with that of the highest rung of the *siddhāntic* hierarchy, which, from the dGe lugs pa perspective, is the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka school.[32]

The Rhetoric of Incompatibility

Much of the rhetoric that falls under this rubric is, as might be expected, highly polemical in nature. Interestingly, a good deal of the polemic was focused on the doctrine of Buddha Nature.[33] Among the doctrines considered questionable by the dGe lugs pa school were the Jo nang pa theories of a solely positive and real Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) and their concomitant ontology, called the "emptiness of what is other" (*gzhan stong*); these doctrines were thought of as heterodox because they were believed to fall outside the tenets of any of the four schools. For the dGe lugs pas, the claim of Dol bu pa Shes rab rGyal mtshan (1292-1361), the founder of the Jo nang pas, that Buddha Nature is "the unchanging ultimate, the blissful, the pure self, the self-arisen gnosis, the *dharmakāya* and the inherent clear light"[34] was unacceptable because it was perceived as reifying the concept of Buddha Nature into that of an enlightened luminous soul that was already preexistent in sentient beings even before their purification.[35] This, of course, was perceived as violating the most sacred premise of the Buddhist philosophical canon, that there is no real self. It was in regard to this same issue that the Vātsīputrīyas, who advocated the existence of an ineffable self neither the same as nor different from the psychophysical aggregates,[36] were considered by many to fall outside the Buddhist philosophical fold. Both the Vātsīputrīyas and the Jo nang pas relied, of course, on the same physical canon as the "orthodoxy" that criticized them. The controversy was not, therefore, over the issue of whether or not there was a possible scriptural basis for their doctrines. The question instead concerned whether or not their interpretation of those texts was adequate. The fact that their doctrines could not be reconciled with the existing *philosophical* canons was considered to be indicative of the fact that their interpretations must be faulty.

32 To say that there existed a rhetoric of this sort is not to say, of course, that one of the various Tibetan schools might not be right in their view that the Prāsaṅgika school is ultimately the only valid philosophical position. The question of the truth of the Prāsaṅgika position aside, however, it is nonetheless clear that, given the hierarchy implied by the *siddhānta* schema, most of these schools got a great deal of philosophical mileage out of identifying their own school as Prāsaṅgika.

33 For some of the Indian background to the problem see David S. Ruegg, *Buddha Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On The Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London, 1989), 19-55.

34 Dol bu pa Shes rab rGyal mtshan, *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*, 4.

35 mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, *sTong thun chen mo*, 393f.

36 Perhaps the most extensive discussion of this in the classical sources may be found in the ninth chapter of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. See Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakoça de Vasubandhu* (6 vols., Paris, 1923-31), V.227-302; Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Soul Theory of the Buddhists* (Delhi, 1976); Matthew Kapstein, "Self and Personal Identity in Indian Buddhist Scholasticism: A Philosophical Investigation," (Ph.D dissertation, Brown University, 1987), 240-272.

A very similar critique of the Jo nang pas is to be found in a short text on Madhyamaka philosophy called *lTa ba'i shan 'byed*, by the great Sa skya scholar Go ram pa bSod nams seng ge (1429-1489). There he describes the Jo nang pas as accepting a reality (*parinispanna, yongs grub*) in which inhere "all infinite positive qualities from beginningless time." This, he adds, they identify as Buddha Nature, which is "permanent, stable, enduring, the unchanging possessor of qualities that are pure, blissful, permanent, and the perfection of the supreme self."[37] Like the dGe lugs pas he characterizes the views of the Jo nang pas as faulty, since they "hold an eternalistic view to be the Madhyamaka" (*rtag mtha' la dBu mar smra ba*). It is equally interesting that he characterizes the views of Tsong kha pa, founder of the dGe lugs tradition, as faulty because "he advocates a nihilistic view to be the Madhyamaka" (*chad mtha' la dBu mar smra ba*). Thus, Go ram pa excludes both views as extremist and in this way claims the superiority of his own view, which he characterizes as the view "devoid of extremes" (*mtha' bral*).

Throughout the history of scholastic Buddhism there are many such instances in which consistency with the doctrinal or philosophical canon can be seen as superseding consistency with the physical canon as the major legitimizing force. This is, of course, but to say that ideology often supersedes philology in the reading of texts, hardly a surprising claim. Any tenet that is not in accord with a literal interpretation of the textual canon can, after all, be made consistent with scripture by the clever exegete. As we shall see, doctrines that do not conform to the fourfold schema can also be made consistent with the philosophical canon, but this was found to be more difficult. The reason for this has primarily to do with the fact that the standardization of philosophy into the fourfold *siddhānta* schema had the effect of making the doctrine more "precise", creating a situation in which allegorical or other forms of nonliteral interpretation became more difficult. Scriptures, by their very nature, are supple things; philosophical canons are more rigid. Scriptures are the objects of interpretation; tenets are the interpretations themselves.[38] Although it cannot be said that concern with demonstrating the canonicity of doctrine by showing its consistency with the *siddhānta* schema became the sole paradigm for philosophical discourse, it is clear that it was a major concern for Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism.

In the *sTong thun chen mo* of the great dGe lugs pa scholar mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang (1385-1438) many examples of the rhetoric of incompatibility are to be found. In one interesting example he criticizes an opponent who maintains that Mādhyamikas do not hold any philosophical views. mKhas grub rje attempts to show the fallacy of this position in several ways. In one argument he states that if the Prāsaṅgikas indeed hold no philosophical views then it follows that their scriptures

37 *lTa ba'i shan 'byed*, 5-7, 28-40.

38 This despite the claims of some contemporary literary critical theorists who maintain that there is no text outside the act of reading, i.e., outside the act of interpretation. See, for example, Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, 12-17, 303-371; Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1985).

> ... are scriptures that do not belong to an advocate of philosophical tenets, for they are not the scriptures of any one school from the Svātantrikas on down, and (according to you) they are also not the scriptures of the Prāsaṅgikas. If you accept the premise then it follows, absurdly, that they are not Buddhist scriptures.[39]

Hence, mKhas grub rje urges the absurdity of maintaining that the Prāsaṅgikas hold no views by attempting to show the incompatibility of this with the *siddhānta* schema. He concludes his refutation of this view with the following lines:

> To say that you do not accept any system, whether Prāsaṅgika or Svātantrika Madhyamaka, clearly identifies you as not being a Mādhyamika.[40]

Any view that does not fall within the *siddhānta* schema cannot be Buddhist. Any position that cannot be attributed to either the Svātantrika or Prāsaṅgika subschools cannot be a Mādhyamika position.[41]

In yet another example mKhas grub rje faults an opponent who claims that the Prāsaṅgika school believes every consciousness to be a form of ignorance. This view is, once again, invalidated by demonstrating its incompatibility with "Buddhist tenets." This, in turn, is accomplished by his claim that holding such a position "leaves one with no other alternative but to conclude that (the Prāsaṅgikas) are the equals of the heterodox Mīmāṃsā school, which accepts that defilement is the nature of the mind itself."[42]

In each of these cases the *siddhānta* schema is used as a filter through which valid doctrine must pass. If a view cannot find a home within one of the four schools of Buddhist tenets then, by definition, it cannot be considered Buddhist. If it does not "fit" into either of the two subschools of the Madhyamaka, then it cannot be considered Madhyamaka. In the rhetoric of incompatibility an opponent's views are shown to be invalid by excluding them from what is valid doctrine as defined by the different schools of Buddhist tenets. The canonicity of a doctrine is determined

39 mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, *sTong thun chen mo*, 298.

40 Ibid., 302.

41 In yet another text, the *Lam ngan mun sel sgron ma* (Collected Works, vol. *ta*, foll. 173a-174a), the same author faults many Tibetan scholars for their interpretation of the Cittamātra doctrine of emptiness, claiming that their characterization of emptiness in the Cittamātra system "lies outside all four *siddhānta* schools" and is therefore non-Buddhist. Tsong kha pa's exegetical strategies are best (*khyad par du 'phags pa*), he states, because they present an explanation of the Cittamātra doctrine of emptiness that is at once consistent with the texts of this school and yet compatible with the fourfold *siddhānta* schema.

42 mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, *sTong thun chen mo*, 287.

by comparison to what is philosophically normative, and this is determined by the *siddhānta* schema.

The Rhetoric of Compatibility

It is incumbent upon the scholastic exegete not only to refute the validity of the philosophical positions of others (*dgag pa*) but also to establish his own (*bzhag pa*) and to defend it against the attacks of opponents (*spong ba*).[43] Just as a rhetoric of incompatibility is employed to accomplish the first task, one of compatibility, that attempts to demonstrate the validity of one's particular formulation of the *siddhānta* schema by comparison with the classical texts of the tradition, is used to accomplish the latter two. Of course, the *siddhānta* schema employed by different schools is itself a construct or interpretation of that particular school of thought. Hence, establishing one's own position and defending it against the attacks of rival schools was in large part tantamount to defending one's particular construction of the *siddhānta* schema. Hence, the validity of one's interpretation of doctrine was dependent upon the validity of one's construction of the philosophical canon by comparison with which legitimation was to occur.

Put another way, we might say that what we have been considering thus far has been only a simplified model of the process of philosophical canonization, one in which the *siddhānta* system was taken as a given. The reality of the situation is actually more complex than what is implied by this scenario, however, for the tradition maintains that the very categories implicit in the *siddhānta* framework, far from being arbitrary postulates, are themselves the result of exegesis performed on canonical texts. The philosophical canon is considered, as it were, the distillation of the textual canon. But how the latter is to be distilled and the nature of the final elixir of course varies according to different scholastic philosophers.[44] Even in Tibet, where there was general agreement over the existence of the fourfold *siddhānta* schema, there was considerable disagreement—and argument—over the nature and subdivisions of each of the four schools. Hence, the mechanism is self-referential and exegesis is involved at every turn. Different scholastic philosophers

43 This tripartite division into refutation, exposition, and defense (*dgags bzhags spong gsum*) is perhaps best exemplified in the elementary debating textbooks (*bsdus grwa*) used in the monasteries of the dGe lugs pa order.

44 The advocates of the text-reader pole of literary criticism, that is "response theorists" such as Norman Holland, Jonathan Culler, and Stanley Fish, will find in this diversity of interpretations proof of the fact that any notion of interpretation as a retrieval of authorial intent is in vain. In this sense we might say that traditional exegesis is aligned more with formalist and New Criticism than with the advocates of reader-response theory. Nonetheless, it will become clear that traditional exegetes, at least those of the Tibetan Buddhist variety, are quite willing to grant the partial validity of alternative interpretations (where "validity" is defined pragmatically), despite the fact that they would never give up the notion that their particular interpretation was "the Buddha's ultimate purport" and therefore the unconditional truth. See my study "Concepts of Truth and Meaning." A comparative study of literary criticism and of traditional exegesis is both a desideratum and a lacuna in contemporary scholarship. It is something to which I hope to turn my attention in the near future.

extract (that is, interpret) from a body of canonical literature different classification schemas which they then use polemically through a variety of rhetorical strategies. This in turn they perceive as not only legitimizing their own doctrines to the exclusion of others, but also as legitimizing that very schema by comparison to which the legitimation occurs.

Since all of the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism accepted the validity of the *siddhānta* schema in general, to challenge an interpretation meant essentially to challenge where and how the lines between the schools were to be drawn. Now, there are several types of faults that have traditionally been pointed out in regard to a particular *siddhānta* interpretation. One school might, for example, accuse another of creating a distinction between two philosophical systems where no distinction deserves to be made. This is a charge that is levelled, for example, against the dGe lugs pa interpretation of the distinction between the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika subschools of the Madhyamaka. There are opponents, for example bSod nams seng ge,[45] who would claim no essential difference between the two subschools in the realm of ontology, a position anathema to the dGe lugs pas, who hold that the Svātantrikas advocate "existence by virtue of own-characteristic", a notion which they maintain is repudiated by the Prāsaṅgikas. In response to this, mKhas grub rje spends a considerable amount of exegetical energy demonstrating that the distinction made by Tsong kha pa, his master and the founder of the dGe lugs pa school, is a valid one, i.e., one based on the Madhyamaka texts themselves.[46] In this way he sees himself as upholding the validity of this aspect of the dGe lugs pa *siddhānta* schema. Of course, the reverse strategy, one that claims a particular *siddhāntic* interpretation fails to be sufficiently subtle in its distinctions, is the other side of the coin. As might be expected, this is the charge that the dGe lugs pas level at those who "fail" to see the differences between the Svātantrikas and Prāsaṅgikas in the ontological sphere.

One final example of the rhetoric that seeks to uphold a particular *siddhāntic* interpretation has already been alluded to above. It concerns the adequacy of the *siddhānta* schema to account for the complexity of philosophical texts. The fact that texts are more complex than a fourfold schema allows for might be viewed as a shortcoming of the notion of a philosophical canon in general, and not as a fault endemic to any one interpretive scenario. If a *siddhāntic* schema is valid and complete it should be able to account for any text, i.e., it should be able to offer each and every Buddhist text one unique *siddhāntic* home. Texts, however, are more complex than such a categorization allows. Confronted with this, exegetes have two options. They can, on the one hand, reinterpret the offending passages to bring *siddhāntic* unity to a text. This is to a great extent the strategy used by the dGe lugs pas in regard to passages in the *Uttaratantra* and in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* that seem to imply a positive and almost soul-like quality to Buddha Nature.[47]

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45 See Peter Della Santina, *Madhyamaka Schools in India* (Delhi, 1986), xviii.

46 mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, *sTong thun chen mo*, 178-185.

47 *rtag rten bden grub kyi bde shegs snying po.* See ibid., 393-397.

When it seems clear that a text has no one single *siddhāntic* orientation, i.e., when, for whatever reasons, the option of reinterpreting offending passages is not resorted to, then the tradition turns to a different strategy, one that claims that the lower tenets expounded by a text have a provisional status. The *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra* of Maitreya, for example, is widely considered a work of the Svātantrika Madhyamaka school. However, this is not the sole stance of the *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra* and mKhas grub rje claims that there are passages in the text teaching that all śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas understand the selflessness of phenomena, a uniquely Prāsaṅgika position. Instead of attempting to reinterpret the entire *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra* as a Prāsaṅgika work,[48] however, he simply grants that the two positions are present and then goes on to explain the reasons for this:

> What is the purpose of stating these two [contradictory] stances? Even among the disciples who possess the lineage of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas there are two types, namely, those whose faculties are utterly ripe and those whose faculties are not. Hence ... [these two disparate claims are expounded in the *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra* and even in the Hīnayāna-piṭaka] so as to accommodate these two types of disciples. But though these two types of explanation are set forth, one must realize that the explanation that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not understand the selflessness of phenomena [the Svātantrika view] is set forth only for the sake of the special disciples [whose mental faculties are not completely ripe], while the explanation that they do understand it [the Prāsaṅgika view] is the correct one ... Hence be aware of the fact that the ultimate intention of the root text of the *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra* is a Prāsaṅgika one.[49]

In this and in the previous ways discussed above, mKhas grub rje upholds the validity and coherence of the dGe lugs pa *siddhānta* schema, defending the distinctions between the schools as drawn by his master, Tsong kha pa, and explains the doctrinal complexity of a given text by resorting either to reinterpretation of offending passages or to a rhetoric of *upāyakauśalya* (skilful means).

The Rhetoric of Superiority

We have witnessed thus far various examples of the rhetorical strategies that are outcomes of the canonization of philosophy. In the first instance the project was to invalidate the views of opponents by demonstrating their incompatibility with the

48 It is interesting to note that in a separate work mKhas grub rje does offer a Prāsaṅgika interpretation of the *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra*. This, however, is undertaken for other reasons. It is clear throughout his various works that mKhas grub rje realizes that *at face value* the *Abhisamayâlaṅkāra* is for the most part a Svātantrika work.

49 mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, *sTong thun chen mo*, 246-247.

siddhānta schema. In the second case, a system's own interpretation of the tenet schema was validated by demonstrating its internal consistency as well as its compatibility with the textual tradition. It remains now only to discuss one final form of discourse, that which attempts to establish the superiority of a school's own position by associating it with the highest rung in the *siddhānta* hierarchy, the Madhyamaka.

Most Tibetan Buddhist philosophical traditions, at least after a certain point in time, reserved the highest position in the hierarchy for the Prāsaṅgika school as expounded by Candrakīrti, although the interpretations of Candrakīrti's system were various. Hence, mKhas grub rje proclaims that, when subjected to logical analysis, the views of the schools other than "that of the glorious Candra" behave "like a pile of leaves exposed to a strong wind."[50] What is more, we find throughout his writings an insistent rhetoric in which he attempts to characterize the views of his master, Tsong kha pa, as offering a unique (and ultimately the only accurate) interpretation of Candrakīrti. Hence,

> It seems that in all of the earlier and later [schools] other [than our own] which boasted of being Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika there did not even occur the slightest suspicion as regards the fact that the Ārya Father [Nāgārjuna] and his son [Āryadeva] define Nirvāṇa differently from, i.e., in a way that is uncommon to, that of other philosophical schools. Hence [we have taken this opportunity] to explain clearly and exactly the beliefs of the omniscient Lord of Yogis [Tsong kha pa], who is a direct follower of the Ārya Father, and his son.[51]

That the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka school was widely accepted as the epitome of philosophical accuracy is also witnessed by the fact that mKhas grub rje could urge on an opponent, the one mentioned previously who maintained that the Prāsaṅgikas hold no philosophical views, the following *reductio* argument:

> It follows, absurdly [from your view], that the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas are not advocates of philosophical tenets (*sgrub mtha' smra ba, siddhāntavādin*), for they accept no philosophical position (*grub mtha', siddhānta*). If this is acceptable to you then [the view that] they are supreme among all of the advocates of philosophical tenets has been lost.[52]

The claim that the Prāsaṅgikas hold no philosophical position is tantamount to claiming that they fall outside of the *siddhānta* classification scheme. This, suggests mKhas grub rje, is anathema because it leaves one with no standards, no hier-

50 Ibid., 255.

51 Ibid., 276.

52 Ibid., 296.

archy of philosophical validity. It leaves one, in short, with no means of determining whose views are best. For many Tibetan scholastics, and for the dGe lugs pas in particular, the lack of a *siddhānta* schema can only lead to philosophical relativism. Whether that is the case or not, the view that the Prāsaṅgika school was the vessel for the highest teachings on reality must have been sufficiently widespread at the time of mKhas grub rje that the absurdity that he urges on his opponent (namely, that it was not) could have had an impact.

In spite of the pervasiveness of the opinion that the Prāsaṅgikas represent the ultimate philosophical position, not all Tibetan schools identified this with Candrakīrti's brand of Madhyamaka. There is even one curious case, curious because it is such an anomaly in Tibetan philosophical literature, in which the highest rung is not identified as Prāsaṅgika at all. It seems that in certain interpretations of the *gzhan stong* tradition, already mentioned, for example that of the eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554),[53] there is an attempt to suggest that a modified version of the Cittamātra system of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu is the ultimate philosophical viewpoint.[54] In his *gZhan stong smra ba'i srol* the Karma pa characterizes this view as one in which the ultimate truth is the stainless wisdom of the Tathāgata, the unchanging, ineffable and pure Buddha Nature, the *dharmakāya* which abides in all beings from beginningless time despite the adventitious defilements that cover it. What is more, he states in unequivocal terms that this system "must be derived from the quintessential instructions of the Lord Maitreya", and that "there is no hope of understanding this profound fact in [reliance upon] any other system."[55] Two points must be made, however, in regard to this work. First of all, it is not clear that it represents the Karma pa's final views on the subject of the Madhyamaka, for we have other more extensive works by him in which he concurs with the majority opinion in granting to Candrakīrti's brand of Madhyamaka the honor of the highest rung. As Paul Williams has pointed out,[56] the Karma pa elsewhere offers a critique of the Jo nang pa/gZhan stong pa tenets just described (in, for example, his *Dwags brgyud pa'i shing rta*). More interesting, perhaps, is the fact that even in his *gZhan stong smra ba'i srol*, where the positive concept of Buddha Nature is made explicit and associated with the works of Maitreya and his followers, the Karma pa never forsakes the Madhyamaka-ness of the doctrine, calling the school by the name dBu ma chen po (Mahāmadhyamaka) throughout. What is more, though it is clear that much of the work is a critique of the Prāsaṅgika school of Candrakīrti, especially as interpreted by Tsong kha pa and his followers, not once in the entire work does he call his

53 See above, note 13.

54 Whether this view has roots in the earlier Jo nang pa texts is not clear. Broido ("Jo Nang Pas on Madhyamaka," 86) implies that Dol po pa eschews the Cittamātra while upholding the Yogācāra, a distinction unknown to most of the later Tibetan scholastics. In the comments that follow, however, Broido's characterization of Dol po pa's position is classical Cittamātra the way it is expounded in the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*.

55 Mi bskyod rdo rje [Karma pa VIII], *dBu ma gzhan stong smra ba'i srol*, 5b.

56 Williams, "Mi Bskyod Rdo Rje's Critique," 137.

opponents by the name "Prāsangika", using instead more indirect nomenclature.[57] What this implies, of course, is that at the time of mKhas grub rje the Madhyamaka must have been accepted without question as the supreme philosophical system among the various *siddhāntic* systems, and that the Prāsaṅgika subschool was itself so prominent that it could not easily be criticized by name.

The Karma pa's rhetoric in the *dBu ma gzhan stong smra ba'i srol* is interesting because it employs the *siddhānta* schema in a novel way. While nominally accepting the fact that the Madhyamaka must be upheld as the highest philosophical school, it is clear that his ultimate task is to urge that the Cittamātra (or at least a modified version of the same) should hold the exalted status of being the Buddha's ultimate purport. To this end he labels this modified Cittamātra with the title Mahāmadhyamaka and proceeds in his task of expounding this basically Yogâcāra doctrine under the banner of the only school that could possibly win the day, namely the Madhyamaka. The fact that he never criticizes the Prāsaṅgikas by name is further support for the conclusion that this was the essence of his rhetorical strategy.

In a work entitled *gSung lan klu sgrub dgongs rgyan*, Se ra rJe btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, a contemporary of the Karma pa, attempts a refutation of the latter's position. It is no accident that rJe btsun pa began his critique with a refutation of the fact that Vasubandhu was a Mādhyamika. He maintains also that, though Asaṅga may have himself believed in the tenets of the Madhyamaka school,[58] the vast majority of his writings were expositions undertaken from a Cittamātra perspective. In short, rJe btsun pa's tack is to show that it is impossible to consider Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as exponents of a single consistent Madhyamaka, and that therefore the Karma pa's exposition, being inconsistent with the *siddhānta* schema, is invalid. rJe btsun pa thus resorts to a rhetoric of exclusion in refuting the Karma pa's rhetoric of superiority.

Conclusion

The *siddhānta* schema, I have suggested, represents a canonization of philosophy in many ways isomorphic to the process of textual canonization. At least if we accept Smith's notion that canonicity is a self-limiting process, the *siddhānta* schema certainly fits the bill of a philosophical canon, a collection not of texts but of normative ideology or doctrine. I have also explored the way in which the canonization of philosophical thought has influenced philosophical discourse by showing how various forms of rhetoric use the *siddhānta* schema to refute rival points of view and to establish their own position as supreme.

57 Viz., *theg pa chen po dbu ma par rlom pa 'ga' zhig* (*dBu ma gzhan stong smra ba'i srol*, 4af), literally "some who pride themselves on being Mahāyāna Mādhyamikas."

58 rJe btsun pa, *gSung lan klu grub dgongs rgyan*, fol. 4b.

Hence we have seen how the opponents of the *gzhan stong pas* resort to the *siddhānta* as a way of criticizing the latter's positive concept of Buddha Nature, and how the *gzhan stong pas* retaliate by claiming for their position a normative status by associating it with the highest rung of the *siddhāntic* ladder, that of the Madhyamaka.

By no means do I wish to suggest that the rhetorical strategies described above exhaust the variety of philosophical discourse in a tradition as rich as that of scholastic Buddhism. However, it has become clear, I hope, that the interpretive techniques explored are important methods through which the scholastics extricate themselves out of the self-imposed limitations into which the *siddhānta* schema, as a form of canonization, impels them. As our knowledge of the exegetical techniques of scholastic Buddhism increases, other forms will undoubtedly emerge. At least in the Tibetan case, however, it seems clear to me that, in one way or another, these rhetorical forms will always be a response to one of the most basic presuppositions of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism, namely to the notion of a finite and identifiable set of normative philosophical canons which has come to be called *siddhānta*.

Lying to Tell the Truth—*Upāya* in Mahāyāna Buddhism and *Oikonomia* in Alexandrian Christianity

Roger Gregory-Tashi Corless

Introduction

"In certain cases a lie is the nearest approach to the truth" said the Christian theologian John Henry, Cardinal Newman.[1] The Japanese have a saying, derived from Buddhism, that "A lie is also *upāya*" (*uso mo hōben*).[2]

Buddhists and Christians find themselves compelled to lie, or at any rate to use "circumlocutions, phrases, limiting words, figures, or some bold and happy expedient"[3] when attempting to speak of what is, for each of them severally,

1 John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843* (London, 1909), 341, n.4.

2 See the discussion by Michael Pye in *Skilful Means: A Concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (London, 1978), chapter 8 ("The Term Hōben in Modern Japanese").

3 Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 342.

ultimately true. Mahāyānists try to express *śūnyatā*, which, as the opening *vandana* of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikāḥ* puts it, is

> unperishing, unarising, non-nihilist, noneternal, ... not a singular thing, not a plurality, unarrived, and undeparted,[4]

while Christians try to proclaim *Deus absconditus*, the 'hidden God' who

> is without form and name .... For predicates are expressed either from what belongs to the things themselves, or from their mutual relation. But none of these are admissible in reference to God.[5]

One way of handling this problem is to say nothing at all. Śākyamuni Buddha is shown using this method when, in the Pali texts[6] he remains silent when asked philosophical and metaphysical questions. In Sōtō Zen, silence is such a prominent feature of the tradition that the tradition can almost be identified with it.[7]

Another approach is to speak in negatives, to say 'nothing' in such a way as to frustrate the mind which tries to understand absolute truths in terms of its own relative worldview. The Buddha of the Pali texts demonstrates this method also by responding to some enquirers with the phrase "it is incoherent" (*nopeti*). This strategy is formalized in the Madhyamaka system and put to practical effect in dGe lugs pa debate and Rinzai Zen *mondō*[a]. It might be called the apohic method since it uses *apoha* ('taking away') as a therapeutic dialectic, a dialectic which is strikingly similar to the so-called apophatic method (from the Greek *apophainō*, 'I remove a light') of some Christian theologians and mystics.[8]

A third approach, which will be examined in this essay, is to say something which is positive but false, or at least not entirely true. We might call this the upāyic method, since it uses *upāyakauśalya* (skilful means). *Upāya* is well known in Mahāyāna Buddhism, but it is not so well known that, at least at one point in its history, Christianity employed a similar technique, which has come to be known as the economic method.[9] Economy, for the Christians of Alexandria in the third century CE, existed in tension with 'reserve' or 'the discipline of the secret'

4 Draft translation by Richard Robinson, privately circulated.

5 William Wilson, *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1869), II.270 (*Strōmateis* 5.12).

6 For example in suttas 63 and 72 of the *Majjhima Nikāya.*

7 See, for example, Katagiri Dainin, *Returning to Silence: Zen Practice in Everyday Life* (Boston, 1988).

8 See my "Speaking of the Unspeakable: Negation as the Way in Nicholas of Cusa and Nāgārjuna," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 2 (1982), 107-117.

9 Although the word 'economy' is used by the Alexandrian Fathers, it was not given exactly its present sense until Newman. See Robert C. Selby, *The Principle of Reserve in the Writings of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (London, 1975), 59.

(*disciplina arcani*). Reserve meant 'withholding the truth' while economy (from the Greek *oikonomia*, 'law of the house,' i.e., how God governs the 'house' of creation) referred to 'setting out [the truth] to advantage.'[10]

A comparative study of *upāya* and economy should be mutually illuminating, contributing both to Buddhology and to theology, and should have implications for interreligious dialogue in general and Buddhist-Christian studies in particular.

In order to focus the discussion, special attention will be paid to *upāya* as it is taught in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*) and to economy as it is described in the *Miscellanies* (*Strōmateis*) of Clement of Alexandria and in Origen's *Reply to Celsus* (*Contra Celsum*).

We will first discuss the notion that some texts in both Buddhism and Christianity are *intentionally* vague, and look at how this obscurity is supposed to uncover the truth by means of parables and similes. Then, we will note how these 'false truths' are arranged, for both traditions, in grades, with a corresponding list of graded auditors. The 'true truth' of both concerns the great and unexpected dignity of the auditors: that Buddhists have within themselves the Buddha Nature, and that baptized Christians are temples of the Triune God. Such a 'true truth' leads to the conclusion that, from the point of view of the highest teaching of either tradition, the other is a preliminary or 'nonfinal' system. Lastly, some practical implications of this conclusion, and of the technique in general, will be suggested.

Intentional Vagueness

Clement begins his *Strōmateis* (a title "not uncommonly used in Clement's age for writings without any strict order and containing varied subject-matter"[11]) with a defense of its chaotic nature. He says that it is his deliberate intention

> artfully to conceal the seeds of knowledge. As, then, he who is fond of hunting captures the game after seeking, tracking, scenting, hunting it down with dogs; so truth, when sought and got with toil, appears a delicious thing.[12]

Later, he tells us that his book is "patched together" to encourage his readers to dig in it as for gold, or winnow it as if separating wheat from a "great mixture of seeds."[13]

10 John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (London, 1919), 65.

11 John E. L. Oulton and Henry Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1954), 17.

12 Wilson, *Writings of Clement*, II.361 (*Strōmateis* 5.12).

13 Ibid., II.140-142 (*Strōmateis* 4.2).

In all this he is following his teacher, Jesus, who recognized that "swine ... delight in dirt more than in clean water."[14] Jesus counselled that we should not "cast the pearls before swine, lest they tread them underfoot, and turn and rend us,"[15] and spoke in parables:

> because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not, and do not understand.... He prophetically exposed [the] ignorance, that existed in them, and intimated that they would not understand the things spoken.[16]

All high truths,[17] in fact, are expressed in oracles and enigmas, so it is not surprising to find that the Christian scriptures are composed in this fashion. Therefore, when we approach the Christian teaching, we need to do so at first as unweaned babes, drinking the milk of catechesis rather than making ourselves ill with the strong meat of exalted doctrine, which is suitable only for those who are mature in the faith.[18]

A similar notion of how to express the highest truth is found in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Rather than, in the manner of some other texts which are called *nītâṛtha* or 'explicit', speaking of the dharma clearly and straightforwardly, the *Lotus Sūtra* is often *neyârtha* or 'needing interpretation'. Its main teaching is set forth in seven 'parables':[19] the burning house, the lost heir, the plants, the phantom city, the concealed gem, the crest-jewel, and the physicians' sons. Śākyamuni Buddha defends this procedure by claiming that:

> the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, by resort to a variety of [explanations of] causes and conditions, parables, words and phrases, and expedient devices preach the Dharma ... all for the purpose of *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi* ... because these preachings ... convert bodhisattvas ... for they who have intelligence gain understanding through parables.[20]

We can now ask how it is that such allusive teachings work.

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14 Ibid., I.350 (*Strōmateis* 1.1).

15 Ibid., I.388 (*Strōmateis* 1.12).

16 Ibid., I.350 (*Strōmateis* 1.1).

17 The truths taught by the Buddha (*Boutta*) are explicitly included in Clement's list of high, or philosophical, truths. Ibid., I.399 (*Strōmateis* 1.15).

18 *Strōmateis* 5.4, 6, 10.

19 This is the standard interpretation of *p'i-yü*[b] which is, more precisely, 'illustration'. Michael Pye notes that the 'parables' are often "little more than extended simile[s]." Pye, *Skilful Means*, 47 & passim.

20 Leon Hurvitz, *The Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York, 1976), 58.

The Medicine of Deceit

When teaching is done through allegories, these allegories are themselves presented to demonstrate the ignorant condition of the hearers. We have already seen that Clement thinks of the uninstructed as pigs. His contemporary, Origen, was a little more complimentary, considering them to be children:

> Just as when we are talking with little children we do not aim to speak in the finest language possible to us, but say what is appropriate to the weakness of those whom we are addressing, and, further, do what seems to us to be of advantage for the conversion and correction of children as such, so also the Logos of God seems to have arranged the scriptures, using the method of address which fitted the ability and benefit of the hearers. In fact, in Deuteronomy it is quite generally stated concerning this type of address which is attributed to God, in these words: "The Lord thy God bore with thy ways, as a man might bear with his son." (Deut. 1:31)[21]

Newman puts this, in his own mellifluous fashion, as follows:

> It is thus that we lead forward children by degrees, influencing and impressing their minds by their own confined conceptions of things before we attempt to introduce them to our own; yet at the same time modelling their thoughts according to the analogy of those to which we mean it ultimately to bring them.[22]

This statement is a rather precise commentary on the parable of the burning house in the *Lotus Sūtra*, in which the Buddha, pictured as a father, calls on sentient beings, regarded as his children, to escape from the large, crumbling mansion (i.e., from saṃsāra) which is on fire.[23] But the children do not understand him. The assertion 'The house is on fire' means nothing to them, and anyway they are busy playing with their toys. So, the father tells them he has some nice new toys for them: little carts drawn by various animals. This is something the

21 Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge, 1953), 240 (*Contra Celsum* 4.71). Translation of Biblical quotation slightly modernized.

22 Newman, *Arians of the Fourth Century*, 72.

23 The story is found in the third chapter of the text. See Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 58-72.

children can understand, it accords with "their own confined conceptions of things," and they scramble over one another to leave the house. Once outside, they find that their father has lied to them. The various little carts are nowhere to be seen. Instead, however, each child gets an enormous, impossibly splendid chariot, bedecked with ornaments and pulled by fleet-footed, strong and rare white oxen. Such a vehicle was quite beyond their dreams, and had their father promised it they would not have believed him. But when they see it they can believe it.

And the point is that it is a form of transportation: what the children in the parable get is "according to the analogy" of what they were promised. This is what distinguishes *upāya* from an outright lie: as Newman says, "an economy ... always preserves substantial truth" whereas "a gross and audacious deceit" does not.[24]

Another allegory of the hearers depicts them as sick, and the teacher as a wise physician. When dealing with a person who is ill, deceit is acceptable. Clement says that the "gnostic" (his word for the mature Christian),

> ... not only thinks what is true, but he also speaks the truth, except it be medicinally on occasion; just as a physician, with a view to the safety of his patients, will practise deception or use deceptive language to the sick, according to the sophists.[25]

Origen regards unreformed humanity as not only ill but insane, making it, he thinks, even more acceptable to lie in order to heal:

> Do you not say, Celsus, that sometimes it is allowable to use deceit and lying as medicine? Why, then, is it unthinkable that something of the sort occurred with the purpose of bringing salvation? For some characters are reformed by certain doctrines which are more false than true, just as physicians sometimes use similar words to their patients. But further, there is nothing wrong if the person who *heals sick friends* healed the human race which was dear to him with such means as one would not use for choice, but to which he was confined by force of circumstances. Since the human race was mad, it had to be cured by methods which the Word saw to be beneficial to lunatics that they might recover their right mind.[26]

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24 Newman, *Arians of the Fourth Century*, 78.

25 Oulton and Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, 126f. (*Strōmateis* 7.9). Newman's translation more clearly brings out the distinction between an economy and a deceit: "he will lie, or rather utter a lie as the Sophists say," Newman, *Arians of the Fourth Century*, 74.

26 Chadwick, *Origen*, 196 (*Contra Celsum* 4.19).

The three themes of children, illness and insanity are brought together in the *Lotus Sūtra*'s parable of the physician's sons.[27] The children became ill after playing with their father's medicine cabinet while he was away. On his return he made antidotes, and the less severely affected children took them and were cured. Others, however, "had lost their sanity" and "said that this lovely, colorful, fragrant medicine was no good."[28] Therefore:

> The father thought: "These children are to be pitied! Their thoughts, having been affected by poison, are all topsy-turvy. Though when they saw me they rejoiced and sought relief, fine medicine like this they will not consent to take! I must now devise an expedient with which to induce them to take this medicine."[29]

The physician called his children together, told them that he was near death and, urging those who were still sick to take the medicine in his absence, "went again to another realm and then sent a messenger back to declare, 'Your father is dead!'." The children were shocked and, in their grief at being left alone (without an enabler, one might say) took the antidote. Their father then returned, alive and well, and his sons welcomed him joyfully.

At the end of this story, as at the end of the other parables, the Buddha asks if there is really any trickery here. His disciples reply that there is not, for the *upāya* had proved itself to be an effective cure.

So, if *upāya* and economy are medicines, the worst thing one could do would be to identify them as the cures, that is, to take the deceitful, or parabolic, teachings at face value. This is just what the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Because they are "arrogant" and full of "overweening pride"[30] they are "profoundly attached to vain and arbitrary dharmas"[31] that is, they regard what they have learnt already as the final teaching.

Literalism is also condemned by Clement: heretics are those who "interpret in a literal sense sayings intended to be understood allegorically."[32] Origen calls this a "very vulgar error,"[33] since everyone knows (as Clement, we noted above, reports) that sacred texts are everywhere interpreted allegorically.[34]

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27 The story is found in the sixteenth chapter of the text. See Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 240-1.

28 Ibid., 241.

29 Ibid., 241.

30 Ibid., 28.

31 Ibid., 36.

32 Oulton and Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, 57 (*Strōmateis* 3.4).

33 Chadwick, *Origen*, 409 (*Contra Celsum* 7.18).

34 For some reflections on this from the perspective of the history of religions see my "Sacred Text, Context and Proof-Text," in *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*, ed. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (Berkeley, 1979), 257-270.

This assumes, then, that students or disciples are expected to change as they advance. And this leads us into a discussion of grades of falsity.

False Truths

When Śākyamuni Buddha speaks, in the *Lotus Sūtra* parable of the burning house, about three little carts and one glorious chariot, he tells us that this is a simile of three apparent forms of Buddhism (*triyāna*, "three vehicles"). These are seen, by the true Mahāyāna practitioner, to be in fact single (one dharma or one vehicle, *ekayāna*) which the Buddha divides into three as an *upāya*.[35] In the *Lotus Sūtra* the three vehicles are those of the immediate disciples of the 'historical' Buddha (*śrāvakayāna*), of the self-enlightened ones (*pratyekabuddhayāna*), and of the Mahāyānists (*bodhisattvayāna*). Later, Mahāyāna revised this in various ways (according, for example, to the *theg gsum* tradition in Tibet and the *p'an-chiao*[c] tradition in China), but the principle of a tripartite division, through which the practitioner is expected to proceed in order, has generally held. During the progression, all three parts of the triple practice (*triśikṣa*) are to be undertaken, but more emphasis is placed in the preliminary stages upon training in morality or conduct (*śīla*) than upon meditation (*samādhi*) or doctrine (*prajñā*).

In twentieth century Christianity, doctrine tends to be taught first, but in the early church this was not so. Enquirers were obliged to go through the catechumenate, which had three stages. First there was the stage of the *akroōmenos* or 'hearer', who was only allowed to listen to the Bible readings with which the liturgy of the eucharist began, and who then had to leave the church. Second there was the *gonuklinōn* or 'worshipper' (literally, 'knee-bender') who was permitted to stay for the prayers which followed the Bible readings. Finally there was the stage of the *teleios* or 'perfect' (also called *phōtizomenos* or 'enlightened') who was taught the Lord's Prayer (which at that time was esoteric) and was, at last, allowed to partake of the eucharistic species themselves.[36]

Clement likes a division into four grades, and he offers three different versions of it. At *Strōmateis* 6:15 he gives us a complex simile of grafting, which produces for him an allegory of four types of people (who, therefore, need to be taught in four different ways): the superficial, the philosophical, the "rustics and heretics", and the gnostics or true Christians.[37] Later, at *Strōmateis* 7:2, he speaks of gnostics, friends, faithful servants, and mere servants.[38] Then, at *Strōmateis*

35 Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 62-64.

36 Newman, *Arians of the Fourth Century*, 44-45.

37 Wilson, *Writings of Clement*, II.373-374.

38 Oulton and Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, 96.

7:10, he says that one ascends "by means of faith and knowledge and love", to which is added "the heavenly inheritance."[39]

Origen holds that the Old Testament prophets could proclaim "without any obscurity whatever, could be at once understood as beneficial to their hearers" because their aim was "moral reformation,"[40] a necessary preliminary to the catechumenate,[41] which he divides into three degrees of faith, knowledge, and divine wisdom.[42]

The intent appears to be, in both Mahāyāna Buddhism and Alexandrian Christianity, to precede the transmission of the sublime and final doctrine by moral transformation. This training in morality is intended to purify the mind (or soul) so that it might be able to understand, and not be alarmed by,[43] the teaching about who one really is. According to Mahāyāna one is not in fact an ignorant *sattva* but a possessor of Buddha Nature, and, therefore, when seen truly, a Buddha. Again, according to Christianity, one is not really a "miserable sinner" (as the Anglican Book of Common Prayer puts it) but (although indeed no more than a creature) one in whom the Triune God has, at baptism, made his dwelling, and in whom his presence is renewed at each eucharist.[44]

If the final truth, then, is that one is either innately a Buddha or is conjoined with God in the deepest part of one's soul,[45] it follows that both Mahāyāna Buddhism and Alexandrian Christianity are claiming, each in their own way, to be not only the supreme teaching in regard to their own traditions, but also in relation to each other.

39 Ibid., 98.

40 Chadwick, *Origen*, 403 (*Contra Celsum* 7.10).

41 "Let anyone come to us who has pure hands and so lifts up holy hands <I Tim. 2.8> to God ..." Ibid., 168 (*Contra Celsum* 3.60).

42 Ibid., 327 (*Contra Celsum* 6.13).

43 In the *Lotus Sūtra*'s parable of the lost heir, the son is terrified when his father first tries to remake his acquaintance, and so the father switches from a direct approach to one of devious expedients. It has become a commonplace in Mahāyāna to identify the true bodhisattva as one who, on hearing the truth about reality (*śūnyatā*), is unafraid. Origen explicitly recommends *using* fear at the beginning of the catechumenate, just as one speaks angrily to children. This explains why God speaks wrathfully in the Old Testament, but lovingly in the New. See ibid., 240 (*Contra Celsum* 4.71).

44 For a structural comparison between the processes of becoming, or realizing, who one already is in Buddhism and Christianity, see my "Two Dramas of Spiritual Progress: the Lord and the Servant in Julian's Showings 51 and the Lost Heir in Lotus Sūtra 4," *Mystics Quarterly* XI/2 (June 1985), 65-75.

45 Augustine famously remarked that he felt God to be "further inside me than my self" (*interior intimo meo*). *Confessions* III.6.11.

The True Truth

The *Lotus Sūtra* concerns itself with running down other forms of Buddhism, the *śrāvakayāna* and the *pratyekabuddhayāna*, later known collectively as the Hīnayāna or Lesser Vehicle, in order to exalt the Mahāyāna, which it regards as a superior Dharma.[46] The inferiority of the non-Buddhist systems, which the *Lotus Sūtra* takes for granted, is made explicit in such texts as those of the graded path (*lam rim*) in the dGe lugs pa tradition,[47] and in the *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury* (*Hizō Hōyaku*) of Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai).[48]

Kōbō Daishi divides all systems known to him into ten stages of mental development. Stages one through three are non-Buddhist and the remainder are progressively purer forms of the dharma. The tenth stage is that of Shingon, which was Kōbō Daishi's own lineage. A practitioner who is at the third, or highest, non-Buddhist stage believes that there is a personal God and hopes to be reborn in heaven. This is, for Kōbō Daishi, to act "like an infant or a calf that follows its mother."[49] However, this somewhat foolish and immature doctrine was taught, to some peoples, by the Buddha. A questioner asks:

> Are the practices of the various heretics based on the teachings of the Buddha?
>
> [Answer] Both yes and no; yes, because they once were, and no because they are not any longer. In the beginning they were the teachings of the Buddha, but during their transmission from the immemorial past their original meaning became distorted and lost. Thus, there are some who observe the precept of acting like a cow or a dog in accordance with their own views, wishing as they do to be born in heaven. In such a practice the original meaning is altogether lost.
>
> [Question] Then if it was the Buddha who preached [to] them he should have immediately preached the doctrine by

46 I have suggested elsewhere that what appears to be a polemic against Hīnayānists is actually a catechesis designed to correct abuses within the Mahāyāna. See my "The Hermeneutics of Polemic: The Creation of 'Hīnayāna' and 'Old Testament'," unpublished paper delivered at a conference on "Buddhism and Christianity: Toward the Human Future," at Berkeley in August, 1987.

47 See, for example, Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London, 1983), pt. 4, ch. 2, on "Non-Buddhist Systems."

48 Translated by Hakeda Yoshito in *Kūkai: Major Works* (New York, 1972), pt. 3, sec. 4.

49 Ibid., 163.

> which all can attain Buddhahood. Why was it that He preached the doctrine of being born in heaven?
>
> [Answer] It was in order to accommodate his teachings to the capacity of sentient beings that He preached thus. Other methods would have been useless to them.[50]

This must be so because all things are really the mind of the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana and

> The original nature of Mind is pure and clean: it is neither within nor without; ... O Lord of Mysteries, the perfect enlightenment of the Tathāgata is neither blue, yellow, red, white, pink, purple, nor of crystal color; neither is it long, short, round, square, bright, dark; neither is it male, female, or androgynous .... The Mind, whose characteristic is like that of empty space, transcends both individuation and nonindividuation.[51]

The mind of pure wisdom is, therefore, like space, the matrix, the possibility which allows anything at all to exist, and any expressed form of wisdom must be an expression (although, perhaps, a much distorted expression) of it.[52]

Clement accepts that there is some truth in Greek philosophy, although he also says that, like a nut, it cannot be eaten whole: one must crack the shell and find the kernel of truth, which is the Gospel.[53] All wisdom comes from God, because "the whole family [of mankind] runs back to God the creator"[54] and it is really the Lord who teaches everyone.

In the fifteenth century C.E., Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus reflected on the Christian meaning of the variety of religions in a text which he called *On the Peace of Faith* (*De Pace Fidei*). His conclusions are, structurally though not of course doctrinally, very similar to those of Kōbō Daishi. He recognized that God was a hidden God (*Deus absconditus*) and so the multitude, who "are distracted by many bodily cares and duties" cannot seek him:[55]

> Therefore, you [God] appointed for your people different kings and seers who are called prophets; in carrying out the responsibility of your mission many of them have instituted worship and laws in your name and taught the unlettered people.

50 Ibid., 171.

51 Ibid., 208-209.

52 Note that such a mind is not the *cause* of anything, and so is not (apparently) like God.

53 Wilson, *Writings of Clement*, I.353 (*Strōmateis* 1.1).

54 Ibid., II.337f. (*Strōmateis* 6.7).

55 Clement goes even further than this and says that God is "ever receding and withdrawing from him who pursues." Ibid., II.4 (*Strōmateis* 2.2).

> They accepted these laws as if you, the king of kings, had spoken to them face to face, and they believed they heard not them but you in them. You sent the different nations different prophets and teachers, some at one time and others at another. However, it is a characteristic of the earthly condition that a longstanding custom which has come to be regarded as naturally the case is defended as truth (*quae in naturam transisse accipitur pro veritate defenditur*). Thus not insignificant dissensions occur when each community prefers its faith to another.[56]

Since, therefore, all religions and philosophies ultimately come from the one God, it must be the case that it is the same God who is "sought in the different rites by different ways and [is] named with different names"[57] and that, finally, "there is only one religion in the variety of rites (*non est nisi religio una in rituum varietate*).[58] That is to say, all religions were originally the teaching of Christ, but these teachings have become distorted over time. Such distortions are merely cultural peculiarities, but they are taken as real truths, and an apparent diversity of religions results. This must be the case because "wisdom itself remains in itself simple and undivided."[59]

Conclusion

We may conclude, first, that even though we might be twentieth century academics, we need not assent to the dreary preference of so many of our colleagues for the literal truth of a text over any deeper or more spiritual meaning which we may find it has for us. The notion that a sacred text has, as Christians say, a *sensus plenior* ("fuller sense") is of such antiquity and so much part and parcel of at least the two very different religions which we have examined, we might decide that it is the modern fashion to discount such a sense that is odd.[60] Literalism, whether of the

56 Nicholas of Cusa, *De Pace Fidei*, trs, H. Lawrence Bond et al. (privately circulated working paper of the 1986 conference of the American Cusanus Society), 1.4, 5f. (Translation slightly adapted.)

57 Ibid., 1.5, 6.

58 Ibid., 1.6, 7.

59 Ibid., 4.11, 12.

60 The editors of *Lux Mundi* (the book of essays which introduced modern German methods of Biblical exegesis to the English speaking world) are supposed to have advised (if I remember correctly the lecture by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, a distinguished teacher of my undergraduate days) that one "treat the Bible like any other book." But, as I have pointed out in "Sacred Text, Context and Proof-Text" (268, n.2), "a sacred book is sacred precisely because it is *not* 'like any other book'."

Teutonic scholarly or the American evangelical kind, may simply be a subset of the attitude which gave us Newtonian physics; and we might hope that, in the future, humans will be able to find a place for both within a larger, freer, and more playful view of reality.

Secondly, given the views of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Alexandrian Christianity on the true nature of the true truth, we might conclude that a triumphalist attitude on the part of either the Buddhist or the Christian would be unhelpful, being more liable to arouse perplexity than stimulate clarity (or, indeed, charity) in those who find themselves uncommitted to the final truth of either tradition.

Thirdly, and most happily, we can see the point of all this. If the Buddhist nirvāṇa or the Christian heaven were in truth anything like our conceptions of them, we would simply be projecting ourselves into a fantasy manufactured out of our delusions. The poet Rupert Brooke has shown us that there is something fishy about this:

> Somewhere, beyond both space and time,
> Is wetter water, slimier slime,
> And in that heaven of all their wish,
> There shall be no more land, say fish.

His piscean theologians are teaching (to put it in Christian or Neoplatonic terms) a *quantitative* improvement without a *qualitative* change in Being (*esse*). Or, in Buddhist terms, they are imagining nirvāṇa intra-saṃsārically. When nirvāṇa is pictured as extinction, it is as uninviting as when heaven is envisioned as 'eternal rest.' This is nicely spoofed by the rock group Talking Heads:

> The band in heaven plays my favorite song;
> They play it once again, they play it all night long;
> Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens;
> Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens;
> ... It's hard to imagine that nothing at all
> Could be so exciting, could be so much fun.[61]

Such a heaven is not liberation, it is a trap. Fortunately, as we advance in our practice, we discover that it is a lie, and we "drop off 'dropping off'" (to paraphrase Zen Master Dōgen), in unconditioned freedom, joy, and spontaneity (*jinen*[d]).

61 From the liner notes to the record album *Fear of Music* by the Talking Heads (Sire Records, 1979).

Chinese Characters

a 問答
b 誓論
c 判教
d 自然

Painting Space with Colors: Tathāgatagarbha in the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra*-Corpus IX.22-37

Paul J. Griffiths

The early history of Tathāgatagarbha thought in India remains obscure. In attempting to elucidate it much depends upon how one chooses to categorize Tathāgatagarbha as a system, upon the decisions one makes as to which terms, concepts, argument-patterns and so forth must be present in order for it to be proper to characterize some text or text-fragment as representing that system. These are large questions, much too large to enter upon in this paper; my purpose here is much more limited. I intend to offer a reasonably detailed exposition of a set of sixteen verses from the ninth chapter of the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra* [MSA] (IX.22-37). These verses deal, or so the *bhāṣya* tells us, with the "profundity of the undefiled realm" (*anāsravadhātugāmbhīrya*), and they conclude (37) with the only use of the term *tathāgatagarbha* in the entire text. There is little doubt that this is one of the few early occurrences of the term in Indian Buddhist texts surviving in Sanskrit; a relatively detailed study of these verses may perhaps shed some light upon the historical and doctrinal questions just mentioned.

The systematic question underlying my comments upon these verses throughout will be: what is the relation between the ground of awakening, that which makes it possible, and the fact of awakening, its essential properties?[1]

In what follows I shall provide first a brief introduction to the texts of the MSA-corpus; I shall then place MSA IX.22-37 in its context within the text as a whole, and shall translate the verses in full and offer expository comments on them, drawing in so doing upon the surviving Indic commentaries.

The Texts of the Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra-Corpus

The MSA, as is typical for any Indian Buddhist text of importance, inspired a very large commentarial literature, both in India and beyond. In this extended sense, the MSA-corpus is large; even the present essay might be understood as a contribution to it. But, in using the phrase 'MSA-corpus' I have in mind a more limited body of material: the verses of the MSA itself, together with the three most significant surviving Indic commentaries. The MSA-corpus in this limited sense has four layers: first, the verses of the MSA itself; second a prose commentary, or *bhāṣya*, on these verses, the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkārabhāṣya* (hereinafter *bhāṣya*); third, an extensive prose subcommentary (*vṛttibhāṣya*) on both the verses of the MSA and the prose of the *bhāṣya*, the *[Mahāyāna]sūtrâlaṅkāravṛttibhāṣya* (MSAVBh); and fourth, another, less lengthy, prose subcommentary (*ṭīkā*) on the MSA and *bhāṣya*, the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāraṭīkā* (MSAṬ).

The MSA, the "Ornament of the Sacred Texts of the Great Vehicle", is a Sanskrit verse-text of 805 verses divided into 21 chapters. All the surviving manuscripts[2] embed the verses in the prose of the *bhāṣya*, and there is thus a sense in which it is misleading to think of the verses of the MSA as constituting a text with

1 This formulation has been influenced by, though is not identical with, the analyses given by David S. Ruegg in, inter alia, *La théorie du tathāgatagarbha et du gotra: étude sur la sotériologie et la gnoséologie de bouddhisme* (Paris, 1969); *Le traité du Tathāgatagarbha de Bu Ston Rin Chen Grub* (Paris, 1973); *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London, 1989).

2 A description of the Sanskrit ms. of the MSA and *bhāṣya* upon which Sylvain Lévi based his *editio princeps* and French translation of the text is given in that work: *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra: exposé de la doctrine du grand véhicule selon le système yogācāra.* (2 vols., Paris, 1907-1911). What I take to be a copy of this ms. is available on microfiche from the Institute for Advanced Studies in World Religions in Stony Brook, New York (ms. #MBB-1-83), although nothing explicit is said in that institution's catalogue as to the provenance of the microfiched ms. The IASWR manuscript is on 218 leaves, and shares all the orthographic peculiarities of Lévi's manuscript, as well as all its lacunae. For more recent evidence from Nepalese mss. see Funahashi Naoya, *Nepōru shahon taishō ni yoru daijō shōgon kyōron no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1985).

an independent existence of its own,[3] capable of communicating meaning outside of and apart from the commentaries and subcommentaries that explain it.

The question of authorship is difficult. The colophon of the surviving Sanskrit manuscript, which is of the entire MSA and *bhāṣya*, simply says that one Vyavadātasamaya, a great bodhisattva, composed the text with reference to the verses of the MSA; the colophon to the Tibetan version of the *bhāṣya* seems to imply that both the MSA and the *bhāṣya* were composed by Vyavadātasamaya.[4] The Tibetan translation of the verses of the MSA (the only version in which these verses are preserved as an independent text) attributes their composition to Maitreya,[5] and later Tibetan catalogues usually include the MSA as one of the 'five treatises' of Maitreya, claiming that the verses of the MSA were spoken by Maitreya to Asaṅga and then later promulgated to the world by Asaṅga.[6] This, however, is a late and almost certainly unhistorical tradition. The earliest Tibetan catalogues of Buddhist texts translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit and Chinese do not know it, and there is no reason to think that the MSA was attributed to Maitreya when it was first translated into Tibetan, or, indeed, at any point during its circulation in India.[7]

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3 The verses of the MSA are, however, preserved as an independent text in the Tibetan bstan 'gyur: Tōhoku #4020, Derge Tanjur [DT] sems-tsam PHI 1b1-39a4; Peking #5521, Peking Tanjur [PT] sems-tsam PHI 1b1-43b3; translated by Śākyasiṃha and Dpal brtsegs, revised by Parahita, Sajjana, and Blo ldan shes rab. For the colophons see DT sems-tsam PHI 39a2-3; PT sems-tsam PHI 43b2-3. The verses of the MSA are found in Chinese only as part of the *bhāṣya* (Taishō #1604).

4 The Sanskrit colophon: *mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāreṣu vyavadātasamayamahābodhisattvabhāṣite caryāpratiṣṭhâdhikāro nāmaikaviṃśatitamo 'dhikāra*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, I.189. The Tibetan colophon to *bhāṣya*: *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan byang chub sems dpa' chen po rtogs pa rnam par byang bas bshad pa las/ spyod pa dang mthar thug pa'i skabs zhes bya ba ste/ le'u nyi shu rtsa gcig pa'o*, DT sems-tsam PHI 260a5-6.

5 The colophons of the versions found in PT and DT differ slightly here. DT reads: *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan ces bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa 'phags pa byams pas mdzad pa rdzogs so* (sems-tsam PHI 39a2). PT reads: *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan gyi tshig le'ur byas pa rje btsun byams pa mgon pos mdzad pa rdzogs so* (sems-tsam PHI 43b2).

6 Bu Ston's *dkar chag*, for example, attributes the MSA thus. See Nishioka Soshu, "Bu-ston bukkyōshi mokurokubu sakuin," *Annual Report of the Institute for the Study of Cultural Exchange* [University of Tokyo] 6 (1983), 56. An especially colorful form of the legend may be found in Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism*. See Alaka Chattopadhyaya and Lama Chimpa, *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India* (Simla, 1970), 156-159.

7 On the Maitreya-tradition see Th. Stcherbatsky, "Notes de littérature bouddhique: la littérature Yogācāra d'après Bouston," *Le Muséon* 24 (1905), 141-155; Hakamaya Noriaki, "Chibetto ni okeru Maitreya no gohō no kiseki," in *Chibetto no bukkyō to shakai*, ed. Yamaguchi Zuihō (Tokyo, 1986), 235-268. The whole tradition of the 'five treatises' (*chos lnga*) is very late. The Ldan dkar catalogue (see Marcelle Lalou, "Les textes bouddhiques au temps du roi Khri-srong-lde-bcan," *Journal Asiatique* 241 [1953], 313-353) does not know it, and there is no clear witness to it in Tibet until the twelfth or thirteenth century CE. This is not to say that there is no Indian evidence as to the connection between Asaṅga and Maitreya; only that such evidence does not point clearly toward the MSA. Perhaps the earliest reference to Maitreya and Asaṅga in an Indian text is in Sthiramati's *ṭīkā* to the *Madhyântavibhāgabhāṣya*. The dedicatory verse of this work offers homage to both the *Madhyântavibhāga*'s promulgator (*praṇetṛ*) and its speaker (*vaktṛ*). Sthiramati explains: "The noble Maitreya is the promulgator of this verse-treatise ... the noble teacher Asaṅga is its speaker, and after hearing it from him, the noble and revered Vasubandhu composed a

[note continues]

It is possible, though, to provide the MSA with an approximate relative dating. It was certainly known to and quoted by Asaṅga, perhaps the greatest systematic thinker of the classical Indian Yogâcāra.[8] And since we know, with a fair amount of certainty, that Asaṅga flourished in the latter half of the fourth century CE,[9] it follows that the compilation of the MSA must have preceded that period—though probably not by much.

The *bhāṣya*, as already indicated, is a prose commentary to the MSA. All the verses of this latter text are cited in it; the chapter-divisions and subdivisions of the verses into groups dealing with particular subjects within each chapter are supplied by the *bhāṣya*. So the structure of each text within the MSA corpus as a whole is largely dependent on that supplied by the *bhāṣya*; it is not inherent in the verses of the MSA itself. As such prose commentaries go, the *bhāṣya* is not especially long and not especially complex. The two complete printed editions each run to less than 200 pages of text;[10] the average comment given to each verse thus runs to only a few lines, and very rarely to more than half a page.

The *bhāṣya* was written in classical Sanskrit, by someone sufficiently at home with the complexities of that learned language to note occasional infelicities in the versification of the MSA.[11] It survives in that language, as well as in versions in both Tibetan and Chinese, the former translated in the eighth century by

commentary on it" (*yasyâsya kārikāśāstrasyâryamaitreyaḥ praṇetā ... vaktā punar atrâcāryâsaṅgaḥ tasmāc chrutvâcāryabhadantavasubandhuḥ tadbhāṣyam akarot*, R. C. Pandeya, *Madhyānta-Vibhāga-Śāstra. Containing the Kārikā-s of Maitreya. Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu and Ṭīkā by Sthiramati* (Delhi, 1971), 3-4.

8 The MSA is mentioned by name in Asaṅga's *Viniścayasaṅgrahaṇī* (DT sems-tsam ZHI 198a4-7), and is frequently cited (though not by name) in the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*. It may also have been cited by Chien-i (Sāramati?) in the **Mahāyānâvatāra*, a work extant only in Chinese (Taishō #1634), although this is controversial. See Ui Hakuju, "On the Author of the Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 6 (1928), 218; idem, "Maitreya as a Historical Personage," in *Indian Studies in Honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1929), 101. For a contrary opinion see Hirakawa Akira et al., *Index to the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (3 vols., Tokyo, 1973-78), I.ix. The **Mahāyānâvatāra* was translated into Chinese before 437 CE, so if the citation should prove to be what it seems, we have a fairly certain terminus ad quem for the MSA

9 This is a date based, more than anything else, upon the date at which the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (almost certainly by Asaṅga) was translated into Chinese: before 418 CE. The literature on the historical and chronological problems surrounding Asaṅga's life is enormous. See, recently (and with citations to the earlier literature), Janice Dean Willis, *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvārtha Chapter of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhūmi* (New York, 1979), 3-12; John P. Keenan, "A Study of the Buddhabhūmyupadeśa: The Doctrinal Development of the Notion of Wisdom in Yogācāra Thought," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980), 181-242; Paul J. Griffiths, "Indian Buddhist Meditation-Theory: History, Development, Systematization," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983), 13-49.

10 Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, II; Sitansusekhar Bagchi, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra of Asaṅga* (Darbhanga, 1970).

11 For example, the term *dharama* (for *dharma*) is used in MSA XIX.69b for metrical reasons. The *bhāṣya* comments: *dharma evâtra dharama ukto vṛttânuvṛttyā* (Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, I.173).

Śākyasiṃha and Dpal brtsegs, and the latter in the seventh century by Prabhākaramitra.[12] There are complete modern translations into Japanese and French.[13]

The *bhāṣya*'s authorship is uncertain. As already mentioned, the colophon of the Sanskrit manuscript names Vyavadātasamaya as the author, and in this the colophon of the Tibetan version concurs. But nothing more is known of this individual, and some have argued that Vyavadātasamaya is not a proper name in any case, but only an epithet.[14] The later tradition in Tibet attributes the text to Vasubandhu,[15] and that in China to Asaṅga.[16] The legends surrounding both of these two individuals are extensive, as is the number of works attributed to each. I have already mentioned the legend of Asaṅga's reception of the verses of the MSA from Maitreya. Here I can only add that, according to an early biography of Vasubandhu, he and Asaṅga were half-brothers, sons of the same mother but different fathers.[17] Whatever the truth of this story—and it is sufficiently deeply rooted in early Indian traditions to be not obviously unhistorical—the fact that this text is attributed to one half-brother in Tibet and to the other in China points at least to the origin of the *bhāṣya* at the time when these individuals were active: say, the late fourth or early fifth century CE.[18] More than this about the *bhāṣya*'s provenance, date, or author, cannot be said with anything approaching certainty.

The MSAVBh is a lengthy prose subcommentary to both the MSA and the *bhāṣya*. It cites all the verses of the MSA and comments upon almost every word in them. It also cites and comments upon a good portion of the text of the *bhāṣya*. It was, like all our texts, originally written in Sanskrit. It does not, however, survive in that language. Our sole witness to it is the Tibetan translation made by

12 Tōhoku #4026, DT sems-tsam PHI 129b1-260a7; Peking #5527, PT sems-tsam PHI 135b7-287a8; Taishō #1604.

13 Into Japanese by Ui Hakuju, *Daijō shōgon kyōron no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1961), and into French by Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, II.

14 See, for example, Ruegg, *La théorie du Tathāgatagarbha*, 40. I doubt whether Ruegg is correct in this contention.

15 As, for example, by Bu Ston. See Nishioka, "Bu-Ston bukkyōshi," 56.

16 The preface (by Li-pai-yao) to Prabhākaramitra's translation of the MSABh suggests that the whole work is by Asaṅga. See Ui, "On the Author," 216; Ronald Mark Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation: Āśraya-parivṛtti/parāvṛtti Among the Yogācāra," (Ph.D Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1985), 32.

17 Paramārtha's *Life of Vasubandhu* (Taishō #2049), probably written within two centuries of the relevant events, gives the most famous version of this story, See Takakusu Junjirō, "The Life of Vasubandhu," *T'oung Pao* (1904), 269-296, for a translation of this text.

18 On the life and times of Vasubandhu see especially Erich Frauwallner, *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law, Vasubandhu* (Rome, 1951); Padmanabh S. Jaini, "On the Theory of the Two Vasubandhus," *Bulletin of the School for Oriental and African Studies* [London] 21 (1958), 48-53; Griffiths, "Indian Buddhist Meditation-Theory," 175-193; Bruce Hall, "Vasubandhu on Aggregates, Spheres and Components: Being Chapter One of the Abhidharmakośa," (Ph.D thesis, Harvard University, 1983), 13-21; Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation," 14-49, 126-149. Frauwallner makes an excellent starting point for study of this issue since he provides a detailed discussion of the literature on this issue through the late 1940s.

Municandra and Lce bkra-shis in perhaps the eighth century CE.[19] There is no Chinese translation, and no full translation into any modern language.[20]

The authorship of the MSAVBh is fairly certain. The colophon of the Tibetan (and only) version attributes it to Sthiramati, and there is no reason to doubt this attribution. Sthiramati was one of the great systematizers and scholastics of classical Indian Yogâcāra. While he was not an especially original or exciting thinker (his works have the feel, often, of scholastic texts produced under pressure by an academician), Sthiramati's texts are of great value in the amount of material they preserve, the extent of their citations of other works, and what they tell us about the state of systematic Yogâcāra thought in sixth-century India.

We can also be fairly certain about Sthiramati's date. There is inscriptional evidence which makes it clear that he was active in India during the reign of Guhasena (538-566 CE),[21] and the generally accepted dates for Sthiramati are ca. 510-570 CE.[22] He was probably connected with the great Buddhist university at Nālandā, and appears to have made it his intellectual goal to master and produce commentaries upon all Yogâcāra literature then available. It is significant that he chose not only to comment upon the Yogâcāra texts, but also upon the summa of Vaibhāṣika abhidharma, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. This suggests a close link in style and content between traditional (non-Mahāyāna) Buddhist metaphysics, and the system-building of the Yogâcāra.

Finally, the MSAṬ, like the MSAVBh, is a prose subcommentary upon the MSA and *bhāṣya*. It differs from the MSAVBh in two main respects. First, it cites and comments upon both the verses of the MSA and the prose of the *bhāṣya* selectively; many verses are passed over in silence (although the MSAṬ does tend to cite the *bhāṣya* rather more frequently than does the MSAVBh). Second, the MSAṬ is considerably shorter than the MSAVBh, and lacks the extended disquisitions which are so much a part of the latter text. It too was originally

19 *Theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan gyi 'grel pa rgya cher bshad pa*, Tōhoku #4034, DT sems-tsam MI 1b1-TSI 266a7; Peking #5531. Rather little is known about this team of translators. The colophon suggests that they were active in Mang-yul, and they certainly belong to the early period (i.e., pre-814 CE) of translation-activity in Tibet.

20 Some sections of the MSAVBh have been translated into Japanese. See the edition and translation of the ninth chapter by the Chibetto Bunten Kenkyūkai, *Ankeizō Daijō Shōgon Kyōron Shakuso: Bodaihon* (2 vols., Tokyo, 1979-1981); I shall make use of this edition and refer to it as CBK. See also Odani Nobuchiyo, *Daijō shōgon kyōron no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1984), 144-288, for an edition and translation of the fourteenth chapter.

21 On this see Sylvain Lévi, "Les donations des rois de Vallabhī," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études*, sciences religieuses, études de critique et d'histoire, second series, VII (1896), 75-100.

22 On the general question of Sthiramati's date see Erich Frauwallner, "Landmarks in the History of Indian Logic," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 5 (1961), 136-137; Kajiyama Yuichi, "Bhāvaviveka, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 12/13 (1968), 193-203; Hakamaya Noriaki, "Sthiramati and Śīlabhadra," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 25 (1977), 35-37. For Bu Ston's treatment, see Ernst Obermiller, *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Bu-ston* (Delhi, 1986), 147-149. Compare Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, *Tāranātha's History*, 180-181.

written in Sanskrit; it exists now only in Tibetan translation,[23] a version made by Śākyasiṃha and Dpal brtsegs in the eighth century CE (and later revised). There is no Chinese translation and no translation into any modern language. The colophon of the Tibetan translation attributes the work to Ngo bo nyid med pa; this may represent either an original Sanskrit Niḥsvabhāva or Asvabhāva. Since no reference to the person in question has been traced in any text extant in Sanskrit, it is not possible to be certain which is the correct reconstruction. In what follows I shall, for the sake of convenience, use Asvabhāva, though without intending to indicate by so doing that I regard this reconstruction as any more likely than Niḥsvabhāva.

Rather little is known about Asvabhāva. Unlike Sthiramati, he was not a scholastic thinker of the first rank in the Yogâcāra school. The Tibetan canonical collections preserve only three works under his name, all commentaries on classical Yogācāra texts. His date is a matter of some controversy. It has been traditional, especially among Japanese scholars, to place him fairly early and, following Hsüan Tsang's Chinese translation of the commentary on the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*, to portray him as a forerunner of Dharmapāla and an exponent of the view that consciousness necessarily has phenomenological content (*sâkāravāda*).[24] But more recent Japanese scholarship (there has been almost none on Asvabhāva in the West), basing itself not upon Hsüan-tsang's somewhat tendentious rendering of the *Mahāyānasaṅgrahôpanibandhana*, but rather upon the much more accurate Tibetan version, has shown this view to be quite anachronistic.[25] The internal evidence of Asvabhāva's own works shows him to be very close to Sthiramati, and to be drawing on essentially identical textual and exegetical traditions; there is no convincing internal evidence to suggest that Asvabhāva was an exponent of *sâkāravāda* (or, indeed, that the attribution of this doctrinal dispute to anyone in the sixth century is anything but anachronistic).

These facts, when coupled with one clear piece of external evidence, also suggest that we should probably place Asvabhāva later than the traditional late fifth century CE date given to him. Asvabhāva cites Dharmakīrti's *Nyāyabindu* in his *Mahāyānasaṅgrahôpanibandhana*;[26] he must therefore be at least a junior contemporary of that scholar. And since Chr. Lindtner has recently given very good

23 Tōhoku #4029, DT sems-tsam BI 38b6-174a7; Peking #5530, PT sems-tsam BI 45a5-196a7.

24 See, for example, Nakamura Hajime, who suggests ca. 450-530 CE (*Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* [Hirakata City, 1980], 276), and who mentions this view of Asvabhāva's relationship to Dharmapāla.

25 The works of Hakamaya Noriaki are of key importance here. See especially: "Mahāyānasaṃgraha ni taisuru Asvabhāva chūshaku no tokuchō," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 19 (1970), 444-449; "Asvabhāva's Commentary on the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra IX.56-76," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 20 (1971), 23-31; "Hsüan-tsang yaku Shōdaijō-ronshaku," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 18 (1969), 140-141.

26 DT sems-tsam RI 106a7-106b2.

reasons for thinking that Dharmakīrti's dates are ca. 530-600 CE,[27] Asvabhāva must have been active in the second half of the sixth century CE, perhaps extending even into the seventh.

The Structure and Content of the Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra

The MSA is not a carefully or tightly structured work. Even with the best efforts of the author of the *bhāṣya* (including the provision of chapter divisions and sectional subdivisions within chapters), it is difficult to avoid the impression that the text is sprawling and repetitious. One of the major themes underlying the whole work is the attempt to establish the superiority of the Mahāyāna, the path of the bodhisattva, over against that of the 'Hīnayāna', a term used in the *bhāṣya* as an aggressive polemical weapon to label what it sees as the inferior path of the 'hearer', the śrāvaka. This polemical thrust is very evident in the early chapters of the *bhāṣya*. The very first chapter is entitled "The Establishment of the Mahāyāna",[28] and the main goal here is to show both that the texts enshrining the "supreme vehicle" (*uttamayāna*)—among which, naturally, the *bhāṣya* numbers itself—are superior to those presenting the "vehicle of the hearers" (*śrāvakayāna*), and that the texts must be understood as words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*).[29] That the arguments offered here are so extensive and vehement is sufficient to show that the MSA is a self-consciously Mahāyāna text, and that it was not uncontroversial to be such in the fourth century CE.

A similar polemic is continued in the second chapter, on going for refuge,[30] and in the third, on spiritual lineage or potentiality.[31] In the former, a bodhisattva's taking refuge in the Buddha, in his doctrine, and in his monastic community is said to be superior to the hearer's in four ways: in terms of its omnipresence (*sarvatraga*), its commitment (*abhyupagama*), its attainment (*adhigama*), and its

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27 See Chr. Lindtner, "A Propos Dharmakīrti: Two Works and a New Date," *Acta Orientalia* 41 (1980), 27-37; idem, "Marginalia to Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇaviniścaya," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 28 (1984), 149-175

28 *mahāyānasiddhyadhikāra*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, I.1-8.

29 The definition given here of 'word of the Buddha' is "that which appears in the sūtras or is found in the vinaya, and is not in contradiction with reality" (*yat sūtre 'vatarati vinaye samdrśyate dharmatāṃ ca na vilomayati*, ibid., I.4 [*bhāṣya* on MSA I.10]). The *bhāṣya* goes on to argue that what is found in the Mahāyāna sūtras fits this definition, since these too are sūtras because the words in them are concerned to 'discipline' (*vinaya*) the passions of bodhisattvas, and since there is no contradiction between what is said therein and reality (ibid., I.5 [*bhāṣya* on MSA I.11]).

30 *śaraṇagamanâdhikāra*, ibid., I.8-10.

31 *gotrâdhikāra*, ibid., I.10-13.

supremacy (*abhibhūta*).[32] In this last, a distinction in spiritual lineage or potentiality (*gotra*) is made in accordance with the division of Buddhist soteriological practice into three paths or vehicles (*yāna*).[33] *Gotra*, the term translated here as 'spiritual lineage' or 'potentiality' is multivalent; it refers to an individual's spiritual lineage, to his spiritual capacities and potential, and perhaps also to his nature or essence.[34] While there are many complexities involved in coming to a full understanding of it, the division of spiritual lineage to follow the division of the Buddhist path into three 'vehicles' (*yāna*) is, in the MSA, one more conceptual tool in the battle to assert and establish the superiority of the *bodhisattvayāna*.

The next seven chapters of the MSA, from the fourth to the ninth,[35] form the heart of the text. These chapters cover the bases of religious training, a standard Yogâcāra set of categories used to divide the path into different kinds of religious practice.[36] First, the practitioner turns the mind towards awakening (*cittôtpāda*); that is, the practitioner resolves to attain awakening—to become a Buddha—and it is from this resolve that all of a Buddha's actions for the benefit of other sentient beings will eventually issue.[37] The practitioner then begins religious practice (*pratipatti*) proper; this is said to be founded upon a turning of the mind toward awakening. It begins with action for the benefit of oneself and others, and issues in

32 *sa eva* [i.e., the bodhisattva] *paramaḥ śaraṇaṃ gatānām iti/ kena kāraṇena/ caturvidha-svabhāvârthaviśeṣeṇa/ caturvidho 'rthaḥ sarvatragâbhyupagamâdhigamâbhibhūtabhedato veditavyaḥ*, ibid., I.8 (*bhāṣya* on MSA II.1).

33 *asti yānatraye gotrabhedaḥ*, ibid., I.10 (*bhāṣya* on MSA III.2).

34 On this see, inter alia, Ruegg, *La théorie du Tathāgatagarbha*; "Ārya and Bhadanta Vimuktisena on the Gotra-Theory of the Prajñāpāramita," in *Beiträge zur Geistesgeschichte Indiens*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer (Vienna, 1968), 303-317. The central point about *gotra* is that the *gotra* one possesses makes possible the nature and extent of one's religious practice. So, using a standard gloss, Ārya Vimuktisena interprets *gotra* as the basis or foundation of religious practice: *pratipattyādhāro vaktavyaḥ/ gotram ity arthaḥ*, *Abhisamayâlaṅkāravṛtti*, Corrado Pensa, *L'Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti di Ārya-Vimuktisena* (Rome, 1967), 73. Frauwallner sometimes translates *gotra* as *keim*. See, e.g., *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* (Berlin, 1956), 258-261, thus assimilating it to *garbha* and stressing the potentiality aspect of its meaning.

35 Chapter IV, *cittôtpādâdhikāra*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, I.13-19; chapter V, *pratipattyadhikāra*, ibid., I.19-22; chapter VI, *tattvâdhikāra*, ibid., I.22-24; chapter VII, *prabhāvâdhikāra*, ibid., I.25-27; chapter VIII, *vipākâdhikāra*, ibid., I.27-33; chapter IX, *bodhyadhikāra*, ibid., I.33-49.

36 The *bslab pa'i dmigs pa* (*śikṣâlambana*) are referred to by both Asvabhāva and Sthiramati in their introductions to the ninth chapter of the *bhāṣya* (MSAVBH, DT sems-tsam MI 66a1ff.; MSAṬ, DT sems-tsam BI 105b5ff.). Interestingly, Sthiramati consistently enumerates the *bslab pa'i dmigs pa* as five (see, inter alia, MSAVBh, DT sems-tsam MI 66a5; 105b6), while Asvabhāva (at least in his introduction to the *bodhyadhikāra*) mentions seven, presumably basing himself upon the following list from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*: *kutra punar bodhisattvāḥ śikṣante/ saptasu sthāneṣu śikṣante/ sapta sthānāni katamāni/ svârthaḥ parârthas tattvârthaḥ prabhāvaḥ sattvaparipāka ātmano buddhadharmaparipāko 'nuttara ca samyaksaṃbodhiḥ saptamaṃ sthānam*, Nalinaksha Dutt, *Bodhisattvabhūmiḥ* (Patna, 1978), 15. The difference between a fivefold and a sevenfold list is obtained simply by subdividing items (1) and (2) in the fivefold list into two.

37 ... *meghopamaḥ sarvasattvârthakrīyātadadhīnatvāt tuṣitabhavanavāsādisaṃdarśanaḥ*, Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, I.11 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IV.20).

awakening itself.[38] Practices aimed at the benefit of others include such things as teaching, and the use of magical powers to help others. Since, metaphysically, there is thought to be no difference between the bodhisattva and those whom he helps, benefiting them means also benefiting himself; thus the two kinds of practice are merged. As the *bhāṣya* puts it: "For the bodhisattva, what is his own benefit and what the benefit of others? For him there is no difference between the two."[39]

The fulfilment of one's own needs and the needs of others leads to a penetration to the nature of things (*tattva*). At this point the text introduces a number of the key metaphysical doctrines of the Yogâcāra; a strong connection between possessing the correct metaphysical views and making progress on the path is asserted. Penetration to the true nature of things leads, in turn, to the full attainment and exercise of magical power. The practitioner comes to have a direct awareness of the condition of every other living being; the ability to hear sounds at great distances; to read minds; to remember previous lives; to engage in teleportation; and to know that all 'influxes' or 'intoxicants', defilements that prevent awakening, have been destroyed.[40] Magical powers of this kind, it should be stressed, are always exercised in the service of living beings, and never for the gratification of their possessors.

This leads to the final topic treated before the ninth chapter's extended discussion of awakening: ripeness (*vipāka*). This is something which the bodhisattva by now both has himself (he is matured, ripe, ready for awakening) and can give to others. Possession of it leads directly to becoming a Buddha and it is that is treated, from a variety of angles, in the ninth chapter

I have explained that the heart of the MSA-corpus is contained in chapters four through nine, and that these chapters provide a sketch of the religious path of the bodhisattva, a path that culminates in the realization of Buddhahood, otherwise called "great awakening" (*mahābodhi*). The ninth chapter itself delineates the properties essential to a Buddha. First (1-3), Buddhahood is said to entail, or even to be identical with, a certain kind of omniscience. That Buddhas are omniscient in very specific sense is a theme commonly presented in Yogâcāra texts, and it is not surprising to find the MSA's discussion of the topic opening with it. Next are treated Buddhahood's nonduality and its salvific power (4-6), and this second theme is then picked up in a set of five verses (7-11) that discusses Buddhahood as refuge or protection. The next section (12-14) turns to that event by means of which Buddhahood is realized (or, perhaps better, manifested) in the life of some specific individual, a radical event known technically as the transformation of the

38 ... *mahâśrayā cittotpādâśrayatvāt/ mahârambhā svaparârthârambhāt/ mahāphalodayā mahābodhiphalatvāt*, ibid., I.19 (*bhāṣya* on MSA V.1).

39 ... *bodhisattvasya kaḥ svârthaḥ parârtho vā/ nirviśeṣaṃ hi tasyôbhayam ity arthaḥ*, ibid., I.19-20 (*bhāṣya* on MSA V.2).

40 These are the standard six *abhijñā*, though given in the MSA-corpus (VII.1 and *bhāṣya* thereto, ibid., I.25) in nonstandard terminology and order. Compare the texts and sources given by Étienne Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertue de la sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)* (5 vols., Louvain, 1944-81), 1809-1817.

basis. There follow three verses (15-17) giving similes and analogies for Buddhahood's omnipresence; two verses (18-19) on Buddhahood's spontaneity in action, and two verses (20-21) on its endlessness. There then follows a set of sixteen verses (22-37, the topic of the remainder of this paper) in which Buddhahood is explored in term of its 'profundity' (*gāmbhīrya*). This section concludes with the introduction in 37 of a new technical term—*tathāgatagarbha*, the "womb" or "seed" of the Tathāgata (this last being a title of the Buddha)—to explain in what sense Buddhahood is inherent to, an essential part of, all sentient beings. A lengthy section (38-48) details the "mastery" or "dominion" of Buddhahood over all psychophysical functions, and this is followed by a return (49-55) to the theme of Buddhahood's salvific action, providing more similes and metaphors to illuminate how a Buddha acts.

The next section (56-59) is of key importance: here, Buddhahood is defined as the "purity of the Dharma Realm", thus introducing another key set of Yogâcāra terms, ones with stronger surface implications of a transcendental ontology. This is immediately followed by a presentation of the theory of the three Buddha-bodies, a way of breaking up the different functions of Buddhas by attributing them to different "bodies" (60-66). Verses 67-76 then analyze the various modalities of a Buddha's awareness, introducing again the theme of omniscience and showing how an apparently atemporal changeless awareness can function (or at least appear to function) salvifically for temporal beings. Verses 77-81 describe, through a set of paradoxes, the nature of the being who becomes a Buddha; 82-85 offer yet another set of images to aid the understanding of how a Buddha acts; and the ninth chapter of the MSA concludes with a summary verse (86) detailing the qualities possessed by the aspirant for Buddhahood.

Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra IX.22-37: Text and Translation

In this section I give, verse by verse, a full translation of sixteen verses of the MSA (IX.22-37), together with the Sankrit text of those verses.[41] I have tried to follow the order of the Sanskrit quarter-verses in my translation, but the demands of English syntax have not always permitted this. I am comforted in my failure by the fact that the translators of these verses into Tibetan were also unable to follow the Sanskrit *pāda*-order throughout. The reader should note that these verses are not meant to be understood alone. They are very terse and almost always need

41 I give the text provided by Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 29-32, 44-45. Funahashi's text, given the availability to him of Nepalese mss. known neither to Lévi in his preparation of the *editio princeps*, nor to Bagchi in his preparation of a second devanāgarī edition, is by far the best available. I have altered his text only in minor orthographical matters (principally by providing the standard double-t in words like *sattva*)

extensive commentary before they will yield their riches; they were used, most likely, primarily as a mnemotechnical device. Explanatory comments will be supplied in the next section.

Although not different before or after
It is not tainted by any obstacle;
Suchness, which is Buddhahood,
Is neither pure nor impure. (22)

paurvâparyâviśiṣṭâpi
sarvâvaraṇanirmalā/
na śuddhā nâpi câśuddhā
tathatā buddhatā matā//

In pure emptiness,
By obtaining the supreme self which is without self,
Buddhas arrive at the great-selfed self
As a result of obtaining the pure self. (23)

śūnyatāyāṃ viśuddhāyāṃ
nairātmyâtmâgralābhataḥ/
buddhāḥ śuddhâtmalābhitvāt
gatā ātmamahātmatām//

Therefore Buddhahood is described
Neither as existent nor as nonexistent;
So when there is a question of this kind about Buddha
The method of indeterminacy is appropriate. (24)

na bhāvo nâpi câbhāvo
buddhatvaṃ tena kathyate/
tasmād buddhatathāpraśne
avyākṛtanayo mataḥ//

Just as with the abatement of heat in iron
And of cataracts in the eye,
So also existence and nonexistence are not predicated
Of the mind and awareness of Buddha. (25)

dāhaśāntir yathā lohe
darśane timirasya ca/
cittajñāne tathā bauddhe
bhāvâbhāvo na śasyate//

In the uncontaminated realm
Buddhas are neither single nor multiple;
[This is] because, like space, they are bodiless,
And because they are conformed to their previous bodies. (26)

buddhānām amale dhātau
nâikatā bahutā na ca/
ākāśavad adehatvāt
pūrvadehânusārataḥ//

Among the properties of Buddha such as the [ten] powers,
Awakening is like a mine of jewels
And like a great raincloud
For the harvest of good for the world. (27)

balâdibuddhadharmeṣu
bodhī ratnâkarôpamā/
jagatkuśalasasyeṣu
mahāmeghôpamā matā//

It is like the full moon
Because it is completely full of merit and awareness;
And it is like the great sun
Because it emits the radiance of awareness. (28)

puṇyajñānasupūrṇatvāt
pūrṇacandrôpamā matā/
jñānâlokakaratvāc ca
mahâdityôpamā matā//

Just as innumerable rays of light
Blend in the orb of the sun,

ameyā raśmayo yadvad
vyāmiśrā bhānumaṇḍale/

Always performing the single function
Of giving radiance to the world, (29)

sadâikakāryā vartante
lokam ālokayanti ca//

So is the innumerability of Buddhas
In the uncontaminated realm:
There is a single function blended in their actions,
[The function of] emitting the radiance of awareness. (30)

tathâivânāsrave dhātau
buddhānām aprameyatā/
miśrâikakāryā kṛtyeṣu
jñānâlokakarā matā//

Just as when a single ray of light is emitted
The sun emits every ray of light,
So it should be understood that
Buddhas emit awareness in just the same way. (31)

yathâikaraśminiḥsārāt
sarvaraśmiviniḥsṛtiḥ/
bhānos tathâiva buddhānām
jñeyā jñānaviniḥsṛtiḥ//

Just as there is no egocentric functioning
Among the sun's rays,
So also there is none
Among the awarenesses of Buddha. (32)

yathâivâdityaraśminām
vṛttau nâsti mamāyitam/
tathâiva buddhajñānānām
vṛttau nâsti mamāyitam//

Just as the world is illuminated
By rays emitted from the sun all at once,
So it should be understood that every object of awareness
Is illuminated simultaneously by the awarenesses of Buddha. (33)

yathā sūryâikamuktābhai
raśmibhir bhāsyate jagat/
sakṛt jñeyam tathā sarvam
buddhajñānaiḥ prabhāsyate//

Just as such things as rainclouds
Are considered obstacles to the sun's rays,
So the depravity of living beings
Is an obstruction to the awarenesses of Buddha. (34)

yathâivādityaraśminām
meghâdyāvaraṇam matam/
tathâiva buddhajñānānām
āvṛtiḥ sattvaduṣṭatā//

Just as colors in cloth are brilliant or faint
Because of the power of knots,
So awareness in liberation is brilliant or faint
Because of the power of penetration. (35)

yathā pāśa vaśād vastre
raṅgacitrâvicitratā/
tathā 'vedhavaśān muktau
jñānacitrâvicitratā//

The profundity of Buddhas in the undefiled realm
Has been described
In terms of defining characteristics, location, and action;
But it is like painting space with colors. (36)

gāmbhīryam amale dhātau
lakṣaṇasthānakarmasu/
buddhānām etad uditam
raṅgair vâkāśacitraṇā//

Although Suchness is in all [living beings] without differentiation,
When it is pure,
It is the essence of the Tathāgata;
And so all living beings possess its embryo. (37)

sarveṣām aviśiṣṭâpi
tathatā śuddhim āgatā/
tathāgatatvam tasmāc ca
tadgarbhāḥ sarvadehinaḥ//

Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra IX.22-37: Exposition

The comments given here are my own, though I have drawn heavily upon what is said by Sthiramati in the MSAVBh and by Asvabhāva in the MSAṬ.[42]

The *bhāṣya* marks off this set of verses as a unit, claiming that its topic throughout is the "profundity of the undefiled realm."[43] The *bhāṣya* also provides, in its comments upon the summary verse 36, a schematic analysis of the structure of these sixteen verses;[44] following this, with some modifications, I propose the following outline: the first five verses (22-26) treat Buddha's defining characteristics, those properties which are essential to it and which thus make it what it is and not something else. The next nine verses (27-35) treat Buddha's action, what it does and how it does it. The two concluding verses (36-37) both, in different ways, provide a summary of what has gone before, with the last containing the key statement that all embodied beings have (or are) the *garbha* of the Tathāgata.[45]

What Buddha Is (verses 22-26)

It should be remembered that the project of describing, in precise and analytical terms, what Buddha is, cannot meet with success. Or so the intellectuals of the

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42 For the MSAVBh I have used the text given in CBK (see n.20 above), 51-72. These pages contain an edition of the Tibetan text of MSAVBh IX (in Tibetan script), based upon the versions found in the Peking, Cone, and Narthang bstan 'gyurs, as well as a complete translation of the same into Japanese. For the MSAṬ I have consulted the Tibetan text found in the bstan 'gyur of the Peking edition of the Tripiṭaka (sems-tsam BI 76b2-78b8) and that found in the bstan 'gyur of the Derge edition (sems-tsam BI 68a7-70b3).

43 *anāsravadhātugāmbhīrya*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 29 (*bhāṣya*, introduction to MSA IX.22-36).

44 *etad* [i.e., verse 36] *anāsravadhātau buddhānāṃ trividhaṃ gāmbhīryam evam uktam/ lakṣaṇagāmbhīryam caturbhiḥ ślokaiḥ* [i.e., verses 22-25]/ *sthānagāmbhīryaṃ pañcamen-âikatvapṛthaktvābhyām asthitatvāt/ karmagāmbhīryaṃ daśabhiḥ* [i.e., verses 27-36; the Tib. translation here reads *lhag ma rnams kyis*, "the remainder", rather than "ten", perhaps because the enumeration given in the *bhāṣya* accounts for only fifteen of the sixteen verses, saying nothing about verse 37]/ Ibid., 32 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.36).

45 My analysis differs from that given in the *bhāṣya* in the following ways: first, I include verse 26 in that section analyzing what Buddha essentially is, while the *bhāṣya* treats it separately as a verse on the location (*sthāna*) of Buddha. Second, I separate verse 36 from the preceding nine, since it clearly looks back to and provides a summary of what has gone before; the *bhāṣya* does not do this. And third, I provide a place for verse 37 where the *bhāṣya* does not.

tradition judge. Using an image borrowed for the title of this essay, verse 36 says that although the profundity of Buddha has been described in the immediately preceding verses, it is in fact like "painting space with colors". The *bhāṣya* expounds this gnomic utterance in this way: "It should be understood that painting space with colors is like teaching about the divisions of [Buddha's] profundity in the undefiled realm; this [undefiled realm] is like space because it is free from conceptual proliferation (*prapañca*)."[46] Just as the attempt to wash color onto space must fail, so the attempt to apply precise conceptual categories to Buddha must fail. Buddha is, by nature, as free from conceptual categories as space is free from color; the attempt to delineate the defining characateristics of Buddha is therefore as quixotic as tilting at windmills.

The texts nevertheless attempt it, even if apologetically, and that they do so in such detail and with such an appearance of precision leads me to suspect that there is something more here that a quick (and incoherent) appeal to a strong ineffability thesis.[47] It is true that the description of what Buddha is proceeds in verses 22-26 by the use of a mannered (but purely literary) set of paradoxes: matched pairs of apparently contradictory predicates are suggested as appropriate properties of Buddha, and then both are rejected. But this, as the commentaries make clear, is no more than a rhetorical device. The principle of excluded middle is not called into question, and there is no strong claim to ineffability. A closer look is now needed.

Verse 22 tells us that neither of the matched pair of contradictory predicates 'being pure' and 'being impure' can be straightforwardly predicated of Buddhahood. Why, then, can Buddhahood not be said to be 'pure' (*śuddha*)? The reasoning is that one could say of of something that it is pure only if at one time it has been defiled and then has become free from taints as a result of following the path of cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*).[48] And this is not the case for Buddhahood; one cannot say of it that at one time it was an ordinary person, a *pṛthagjana*, and

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46 *sêyam anāsrave dhātau niṣprapañcatvād ākāśopame gāmbhīryaprabhedadeśanā yathā raṅgair ākāśacitraṇā veditavyā*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 32 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.36). Asvabhāva mentions here that the analogy of painting space with colors is to be understood in accord with what is said in the *Sāgaramatisūtra* (*rgya mtsho'i blo gros kyi mdo'i rjes su 'brang bar khong du chud par bya'o*, DT sems-tsam BI 70b3 [MSAṬ on MSA IX.36]0. The *Sāgaramatisūtra* survives in Tibetan under the more usual title *Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā* (Tōhoku #152); I have not yet been able to locate the analogy in that text. The *Sāgaramati* is frequently quoted in other texts, for example the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, but these quotations do not include the analogy in question. Sthiramati scarcely comments on the analogy, observing only that "freedom from conceptual proliferation" means simply the absence of subject (*grāhaka*) and object (*grāhya*): *spros pa med pa'i phyir zhes bya ba ni gzung ba dang 'dzin pa gnyis med pa'i phyir zhes bya ba'i don to*, CBK 71 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.36).

47 For this term and a perceptive theoretical analysis of the kinds of ineffability see Keith E. Yandell, "Some Varieties of Ineffability," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 10 (1979), 167-179. More recently see John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven, 1989), 236-251.

48 So Sthiramati: *sngon kun nas nyon mongs pa'i rang bzhin yin pa las phyis lam bsgoms te dri ma med par gyur pa ni dag pa zhes bya'o/* CBK 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.22).

that it then became a Buddha. Rather, it has always been, as the verse says, Suchness (*tathatā*) and so also emptiness (*śūnyatā*),[49] and this is true even when it is (apparently) still an ordinary person. Even then it has radiance (*ābhāsvara*) as its essential nature, just as it also does when it is (apparently) an *anuttarasamyaksaṃbuddha*; since nothing has been cleansed from it when the apparent transformation from an ordinary person to a Buddha occurs, it makes no sense to call it 'pure'.[50] Asvabhāva makes similar comments: for purification to occur, and thus for it to be proper to call Buddhahood 'pure', there must be taints to be removed. But since the *dharmadhātu* is untainted both before and after (i.e., always), it is not proper to call it pure.

It is easier to explain why Buddhahood is not 'impure': it is, simply, free from all obstacles (*āvaraṇa*), all taints (*mala*). But to say this, of course, raises the very problem with which I'm concerned here. If Buddhahood is indeed free from such things the implication is that there are such things to be free from. And yet, in denying that it is proper to say that Buddhahood-Suchness-Dharmadhātu is 'pure', our texts have already affirmed that it is not the case that purification has occurred, and therefore also, presumably, not the case that these taints and obstacles exist anywhere to be removed or purified. That the commentators are aware of the problem is made clear by the fact that both of them, in specifying the kinds of obstacle and taint from which Buddhahood is always free (and so neither impure not pure), are careful to qualify them with the term "adventitious" (*āgantuka*). This means—and to this I shall return—that no obstacle or taint can belong to the essence or genuine nature of Buddhahood. In so far as there is a connection between such things and Buddhahood it must be accidental, contingent, or adventitious.

Verse 22 and its commentaries thus suggest that there is a fundamental identity between the ground of awakening, that which makes it possible, and its nature, what it is really like. No genuine transformation occurs, it appears, when a *pṛthagjana* becomes an *anuttarasamyaksaṃbuddha*, and yet clearly some kind of transformation must occur, even if one that happens only at the level of appearance. It is with this dialectical tension that the rest of the verses play.

Verse 23 provides some playful tropes on the key term 'self': "By obtaining the supreme self which is without self/ Buddhas arrive at the great-selfed self/ As a result of obtaining the pure self." Buddha has one, indeed a supreme, self, but the

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49 *sangs rgyas kyi chos kyi sku ni de bzhin nyid stong pa nyid kyi rang bzhin yin par 'dod de/* Ibid., 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.22).

50 *stong pa nyid ni so so'i skye po'i dus na yang stong pa dang rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba'i rang bzhin yin/ phyi ma ste mngon par sangs rgyas pa'i dus na yang stong pa dang rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba'i rang bzhin yin pas dag pa'i rang bzhin du khyad par med de de la sbyang du med pas na dag pa med pa yin no/* Ibid., 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.22). Compare Asvabhāva's comments: *snga ma dang phyi ma khyad par med pa'i phyir dag pa yang ma yin zhes bya ba ni gang gi phyir sngar yang kun nas nyon mongs pa ma yin la/ phyis kyang ma yin pa de'i phyir dag pa ma yin te/ gang la dri ma yod pa de dag par 'gyur na chos kyi dbyings de ni sngar ma phyi ma kyang dri ma can ma yin no/* DT sems-tsam BI 68a7-68b1 (MSAṬ on MSA IX.22).

essence of Buddha is precisely the absence of self. It is this absence that defines Buddha, just as (to borrow Asvabhāva's image) heat defines fire and hardness defines iron.[51] Further, this supreme self is "pure Suchness" (*viśuddhā tathatā*), the way things are with no adventitious defilements attached. It is interesting that the *bhāṣya* uses verbs of attainment (*labh-*; *āp-*), apparently to refer to a change in Buddha: there is, it seems, a time when Buddha does not have this supreme self, and so at the time when it is obtained a change of some sort must occur. Sthiramati makes this quiet clear, actually using the phrase "at that time" to refer to the moment when the attainment of pure Suchness occurs.[52] He also specifies that the change in question consists in the removal of the taint of dualistic perception and cognition, perception and cognition, that is to say, dominated by a phenomenological separation of subject and object.[53]

But once again the question underlying this essay is not clearly answered: does the apparent transformation discussed in this verse refer to the removal of some really existing taint, or to the removal of an illusion? What, exactly, is the ontological status of these taints? On the answer to these questions depends the view to be taken of what it means to say that all living beings have (or are; on this more later) the embryo of the Tathāgata; more simply, some approach to an answer to these questions is needed before I can say what it might mean to assert Buddha Nature in the MSA-corpus.

But the text teases me: in verses 24 and 25 it denies that either existence or nonexistence (*bhāva/abhāva*) can be predicated of Buddha. When such a question is asked, the proper response is to use the "method of indeterminacy" (*avyākṛta-nāya*)—which is, simply, to deny an answer to the question in the terms in which it is framed. By extension, I assume, my question about the ontological status of defilements in those who are (phenomenally) non-Buddhas, would be given the same treatment.

This is a familiar tactic in Buddhist philosophical debate, going back to the very earliest times, perhaps even to the historical Buddha himself.[54] Its application here is entirely typical: what looks like a paradoxical—or even outright incoherent—rejection of both of a matched pair of contradictory predicates turns out

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51 *dper na sa ni sra ba'i bdag nyid do zhes bya ba sra ba'i ngo bo nyid do zhes bya bar shes pa dang/ me ni dro ba'i bdag nyid do zhes bya ba ni dro ba'i ngo bo nyid do zhes bya bar shes pa ltar 'dir yang de dang 'dra ste/* DT sems-tsam BI 68b2-3 (MSAṬ on MSA IX.23).

52 *sangs rgyas rnams kyis bdag med pa'i mchog thob par gyur pas/ de'i tshe na sangs rgyas rnams bdag nyid chen po'i bdag nyid du gyur pa ...* CBK 51 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.23).

53 *de'ang nam gzung 'dzin gyi dri ma las dag par gyur na bdag med pa'i mchog tu gzhag go zhes bya ba'i don to/* Ibid., 54 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.23).

54 On the unanswered (and perhaps also unanswerable) questions in the Theravāda tradition see Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* (Cambridge, 1982), 131-138. More broadly see Lamotte, *Le traité*, 2003-2005. The philosophical technique in question gets developed through the application of the tetralemma (*catuṣkoṭi*), on which see David S. Ruegg, "The Uses of the Four Positions of the Catuṣkoṭi and the Problem of the Description of Reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 5 (1977), 1-71 (with extensive discussion of earlier literature).

to be instead an affirmation of both, though an affirmation made by giving very different senses to the words.

Such is the case with verses 24-25. "Buddhahood," it is said, "is described neither as existent nor as nonexistent" (25ab), but as the commentaries make clear, "existence" and "nonexistence" are given different senses before they are denied (from which it follows that each of them is also affirmed in the contradictory of the sense in which they are denied). The *bhāṣya* explains the apparent contradiction by identifying Buddha with Suchness, which does exist: thus the sense in which Buddha may be said to exist (or to not not-exist). It then points out that Suchness, in turn, is characterized by the absence or nonexistence of persons (*pudgala*) and things (*dharma*): and this provides the sense in which Buddha may be said not to exist.[55] The later commentaries, by Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, make the same point, but in somewhat different terminology. They introduce the technicalities of the three-aspect (*trisvabhāva*) theory of experience,[56] explaining that it is not proper to say that Buddha exists because of the absence (nonexistence) therein of everything that is imaginatively constructed (*parikalpita*), and that it is not proper to say that Buddha does not exist because of the presence (existence) therein of what is perfected (*pariniṣpanna*)—that is, Suchness.[57]

Verse 25 illustrates the point with an analogy. The ontological status of passionate attachment (*rāga*) and metaphysical ignorance (*avidyā*) in Buddha is likened to that of heat in red-hot iron and cataracts in the eye. The analysis given to this analogy is somewhat complicated. To simplify matters I shall consider only one-half of it, the half that likens the absence or removal (*śānti*, more literally 'tranquillization' or 'peace') of cataracts (*timira*) in the eye (*darśana*, more literally 'seeing' or 'vision') to the absence or removal of ignorance (*avidyā*) in Buddha's awareness (*jñāna*). There are three terms here: there is a subject (*buddhajñāna* or *darśana*), a property (*avidyā* or *timira*), and its removal (*śānti*). Existence is denied

55 *tenâiva kāraṇena buddhatvaṃ na bhāva ucyate/ pudgaladharmâbhāvalakṣaṇatvāt tathatāyās tadātmakatvāc ca buddhatvasya/ nâbhāva ucyate tathatālakṣaṇabhāvāt/* Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 30 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.24). On the nonexistence of persons and things see, classically, *Triṃśikābhāṣya* on *Triṃśikā* 1ac, Sylvain Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: deux traités de Vasubandhu: Viṃśatikā (La Vingtaine) accompagnée d'une explication en prose, et Triṃśikā (La Trentaine) avec le commentaire de Sthiramati* (Paris, 1925), 15-17.

56 For a discussion of which see Nagao Gadjin, "The Buddhist World-View as Elucidated in the Three-Nature Theory and its Similes," *Eastern Buddhist* 16 (1983), 1-18; Paul J. Griffiths, *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (La Salle, Illinois, 1986), 84-91; Aramaki Noritoshi, "Paratantrasvabhāva I — A Diagrammatic Account," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 15 (1967), 955-941. The doctrine is given classical exposition in the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*, a useful annotated edition and translation of which may be found in Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, "The Trisvabhāvakārikā of Vasubandhu," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 11 (1983), 225-266.

57 *sangs rgyas ni chos kyi sku yin la/ chos kyi sku ni stong pa nyid yin pas stong pa nyid la ni kun tu brtags pa'i gang zag gi dngos po yang med/ kun tu brtags pa'i chos kyi dngos po yang med pa'i phyir dngos po yod pa ma yin pa'o/ yongs su grub pa'i rang bzhin ni yod pa yin la/ kun brtags kyi chos dang gang zag gi ri bong gi rva bzhin du med pas ni de'i tshe na yod par mi gzhag go/ dngos po med pa yang ma yin te/ de bzhin nyid yongs su grub pa'i mtshan nyid de'i tshe yod pa'i phyir ro/* CBK 55 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.24).

because the subject does not essentially, inherently, possess the property in question: eyes exist and function without cataracts, and Buddha's awareness exists and functions without ignorance.[58] And nonexistence is denied because, precisely, the subject does possess the property of being free from the property under discussion: healthy eyes, that is to say, do possess the property of not having cataracts in them, and Buddha's awareness does possess the property of being free from ignorance. But once again, the thrust of the analogy is to suggest a real transformation in Buddha's awareness at a particular time, a real removal of something that really exists, and a real attainment of something not present before. The now-healthy eye sees clearly when its cataract is removed, just as Buddha obtains omniscience when metaphysical ignorance is removed.[59] Certainly, the ground of awakening (the healthy eye or Buddha's awareness) existed throughout; but so, until the moment of transformation that defines awakening, did the defilements.[60]

So, in terms of the text's analysis of what Buddha is, the provisional conclusion can only be that matters are not clear. Some of the language used—most especially the programmatic statement at the beginning of verse 22—"Although not different before and after/ It is not tainted by any obstacle"—strongly suggests that no real transformation can occur in Buddha, other language (especially in verses 24 and 25) equally strongly suggests that a real transformation does occur, and that real defilements are removed by it. It is consistently and clearly stated that no defilement is an essential property of Buddha; but it is less clear exactly what is meant by calling such defilements as Buddha possesses (or appears to possess) "accidental" or "adventitious" (*āgantuka*). And this, of course, is the fundamental problem in elucidating Buddha Nature or Tathāgatagarbha thought. Perhaps matters will be clearer after a look at what the texts say about Buddha's action.

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58 The *bhāṣya* says this laconically: *yathā ca lohe dāhaśāntir darśane ca timiramalasya* [Funahashi prefers this reading on the basis of ms. evidence, but Tib. reads simply *rab rib*] *śāntir na bhāvo dāhatimirayayor abhāvalakṣaṇatvāt*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 30 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.25ab). Asvabhāva employs the image of the cure of a fever to make the same point: *rims nad med pa bzhin no/ ji ltar rims nad dang bral ba yod pa ma yin pa de bzhin du tsha ba dang rab rib dang bral ba yang yod pa ma yin no/* DT sems-tsam BI 68b6-7 (MSAṬ on MSA IX.25ab). Sthiramati's comments (CBK 56-57) are also useful.

59 Sthiramati makes this connection: ... *sems rnam par grol ba dang/ shes rab rnam par grol ba'i dus na 'dod chags kyi tsha ba dang/ ma rig pa'i rab rib med pa'i phyir ro/ med pa zhes kyang mi brjod de/ sems rnam par grol ba dang/ shes rab rnam par grol ba phyi na yod pa'i phyir ro/ de la 'dod chags dang bral na ni sems rnam par grol bar 'gyur te/ mya ngan las 'das pa thob ces bya ba'i don to/ ma rig pa dang bral na ni shes rab rnam par grol bar 'gyur te/ thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes thob ces bya ba'i don to/* CBK 58 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.25cd).

60 I pass over in silence here verse 26, which introduces a theme of marginal relevance to this essay: that of the singularity and/or plurality of Buddha. The apparent contradiction is resolved in the same way: there is a sense in which Buddha is single (in its Dharma Body), and a sense in which it is plural (in its Enjoyment and Transformation Bodies). There is a parallel (though more extensive) discussion in the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*-corpus. See Paul J. Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening: A Translation and Study of the Tenth Chapter of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṅgraha* (New York, 1989), 241-243.

How Buddha Acts (verses 27-35)

These verses employ a number of analogies for Buddha's action, among which the most important is that of the sun and its rays, first mentioned in verse 28 (" ... it is like the great sun/ Because it emits the radiance of awareness") and picked up and developed throughout verses 29-33. Verses 34 and 35 introduce a new and fascinating analogy —that of the knots in cloth—to explain how it is that Buddha's awareness is not (or does not seem to be) omnipresent: this is the central question of this essay. I shall discuss these images or analogies in turn.

Just as the sun emits rays of light (*raśmi*), so Buddha emits awareness (*jñāna*); and just as the sun does so everywhere, in all directions, so Buddha's awareness illumines the minds of all living beings.[61] Verses 29 and 30 develop and apply the analogy: the rays of light coming from the sun are not really multiple; rather, they are single, blended or mixed (*miśra/'dres pa*) together with just one function—that of bringing radiance to the world.[62] Verse 30 concludes: "There is a single function blended in their actions/ [The function of] emitting the radiance of awareness" (30cd). Sthiramati explains in detail: just as the common function of each and every ray of the sun is to ripen and illuminate, so the common function of Buddha's awareness is to "suffuse" (*khyab pa/sphar-*) all possible objects of awareness with itself, and to bring living beings to full religious maturity by the use of such things as magical transformations—a clear reference to the *nirmāṇakāya*, the body of magical transformation through which Buddha appears to human persons in the world of physical form.[63] This point is made also in verse 33: "So it

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61 So Sthiramati: *dper na nyi ma chen pos stong gsum* [*gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams; stong gsum* is a shorthand expression for *trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*] *kun du snang bar byed pa de bzhin du/ de bzhin gshegs pa rnams kyi ye shes las kyang dam pa'i chos bshad pa'i 'od zer byung gnas phyogs bcu'i sems can thams cad kyi sems kyi rgyud la snang bar byed pas na nyi ma chen po dang 'dra ste/* CBK 63 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.28d)

62 Or, as the *bhāṣya* puts it, "the function of ripening and drying and the like" (*raśmīnām ekakāryatvaṃ pācanaśoṣaṇādisamānakāryatvād veditavyam*, Funahashi, *Nepōru shahon*, 31 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.29ab). Sthiramati's comment on *ameyā ... yadvad vyāmiśrā* from verse 29ab is useful here, especially his gloss on *vyāmiśrā* as "having a single function": ... *'dres pa gcig tu 'jug pa bstan te/ 'dres pa gcig ces bya ba'i don to/ 'od zer de dag dang po yang nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor las byung ba la/ byung ba'i tshe na yang dus gcig tu byung zhing tha dad pa mi 'dra ba med par 'byung la/ rten kyang nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor la brten cing 'od zer thams cad snang bar byed par 'od zer gcig gis snang ba'i las byas pa na 'od zer tshad med pa gzhan thams cad kyi snang ba'i las kyang 'od zer gcig po des byas pa yin te/* CBK 63 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.29ab).

63 *ji ltar nyi ma'i 'od zer gcig gis 'jig rten gyi khams snang bar bya ba kun tu snang bar byed pa de bzhin du 'od zer gnyis pa la sogs pas kyang gcig gis khyab pa'i gnas kun tu khyab*

[note continues]

should be understood that every object of awareness/ Is illuminated simultaneously by the awarenesses of Buddha."[64]

But all this raises very difficult questions. If Buddha's awareness really is omnipresent and spontaneous, like the sun's rays, then it is difficult to see why it is not immediately apparent everywhere, why all living beings are not at once brought to full religious maturity—for this is the single function of Buddha. To put the question differently (and it is the old question in a different guise): how is it possible for Buddha's awareness to be obstructed, and what ontological status do such obstructions have?

Verse 34 begins to speak to this, offering the analogy of rainclouds obscuring the sun's rays. Similarly, it is the wickedness or depravity (*duṣṭatā*) of living beings that obstructs the proper functioning of Buddha's awareness. This again suggests that depravity is real; after all, it can prevent Buddha's awareness from effecting its salvific work, and so seems to be something that genuinely needs removing. And this presents yet again the basic problem: how can the undifferentiated, single Buddha-awareness be differentiated, split, and separated by being present (apparently) to different extents and in different ways in different places—that is, in different living beings?

The opening half-verse of 35 is important here: "Just as colors in cloth are brilliant or faint/ Because of the power of knots ...". This is an analogy drawn from the cloth-dying trade, as Sthiramati's comment makes clear. When a dyer dyes white cloth—cloth that is naturally of one color—the cloth is evenly permeated with the dye where there are no knots to prevent the color soaking through. But where there are such knots an uneven or variegated pattern is produced.[65] There is, perhaps, a play on the word *pāśa*, 'knot', here: this is not only a term used in dying, but also a term used more broadly to refer to any bond or fetter, anything that prevents spiritual advancement.

The point of the image is, in any case, clear enough. The radiance of Buddha's awareness is not present everywhere to precisely the same extent because there are some things—knots or fetters—that prevent it suffusing the entire cosmos

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cing snang bar byed pa de dang 'dra bar de bzhin gshegs pa gcig gi ye shes kyis shes bya kun la khyab cing snang ba dang/ Ibid., 65 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.30cd).

64 The commentaries are unanimous that it is Buddha's freedom from egocentricity (*mamatvâbhāva*) which makes possible the spontaneity and simultaneity of Buddha's awareness. Asvabhāva's comment is typical: *de bzhin du sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das chos kyi sku la gnas pa nyon mongs pa dang shes bya'i sgrib pa bag chags dang bcas te spangs par ngar 'dzin dang nga yir 'dzin pa spangs pa rnams kyi ye shes me long lta bu la sogs pa gang dag yin pa de dag 'jug pa la yang bdag gir 'dzin pa mi mnga'/ nga yir 'dzin pa mi mnga' bar shes bya thams cad la 'jug go/* DT sems-tsam BI 70a1-2 (MSAṬ on MSA IX.33). The reference to *ādarśajñāna* is significant, pointing forward as it does to MSA IX.67-68, where this is discussed in detail. I have made some comments on this in my "Omniscience in the Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra and its Commentaries," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 33 (1990), 85-120.

65 *dper na gos dkar po'i mtshan nyid rang bzhin gcig kyang mdud pa bar nas tshon du btsos na gang du mdud pa ma bor bar ni tshon gyis zhen la/ gang du mdud pa bor bar ri mo bkra ba de bzhin du zhes bya ba'i don to/* CBK 69 (MSAVBh on MSA IX.35ab).

evenly.[66] There is another interesting implication: the white cloth is naturally not the same color as the dye; otherwise there would be no point in dying it. And so, it would seem, living beings are not naturally (inherently, essentially) awakened; they need to be dyed with the dye of Buddha's radiance before they can become so. But this is an implication only. There is no evidence in the commentaries that the tradition wished to make it explicit, though its presence can hardly be accidental.

Living Beings and Tathāgatagarbha

The last verse to be discussed is verse 37, in which for the first and only time the term *garbha* is used. I quote the verse again in full:

Although Suchness is in all [living beings] without differentiation,
When it is pure,
It is the essence of the Tathāgata;
And so all living beings possess its embryo.

The *bhāṣya* explains that "its embryo" (*tadgarbha*) means *tathāgatagarbha*. Since the verse states an identity between "pure Suchness" and "the essence of the Tathāgata", this entails that living beings also have the embryo of pure Suchness. I am assuming here that both the key compounds found in the *bhāṣya* on verse 37 are to be interpreted as *bahuvrīhi* compounds. So when the *bhāṣya* uses the compound *tadviśuddhisvabhāva* to modify *tathāgata*, I would translate "the Tathāgata has as his essential nature the purity of that [Suchness]"; and when the *bhāṣya* introduces the compound *tathāgatagarbha* to modify *sarve sattvāḥ*, I would translate "all living beings possess the embryo of the Tathāgata".[67] But other interpretations are possible. One could take *tad[tathatā]viśuddhisvabhāva* as a simple *tatpuruṣa*—"the Tathāgata is the essence of the purity of Suchness" (*tathatāyā viśuddheḥ svabhāvaḥ*)—and do the same with *tathāgatagarbha*—"all living beings are the embryo of the Tathāgata" (*tathāgatasya garbhaḥ*). The Tibetan translation, in fact,

66 This theme comes up throughout the MSA-corpus. See, for another good example, the image of the moon and the broken waterpots in MSA IX.16, and Sthiramati's comments thereto (DT sems-tsam MI 116b5-117a2). I have discussed this elsewhere; see especially "Buddha and God," 518-523.

67 Technically, the analysis of these compounds would be: *tadviśuddhisvabhāvaḥ* (understanding the demonstrative pronoun to refer to *tathatā*) = *tathatāyā viśuddhiḥ svabhāvo yasya sa tathatāviśuddhisvabhāvaḥ; tathāgatagarbhāḥ = tathāgatasya garbho yeṣāṃ te tathāgatagarbhāḥ*. One could also, I suppose, analyze *tathāgatagarbha* thus: *tathāgato garbho yeṣāṃ te tathāgatagarbhāḥ*, but it's not clear that this would make much difference to the meaning.

appears to take the first compound as a *tatpuruṣa* and the second as a *bahuvrīhi*;[68] one could also take both compounds as *tatpuruṣas* (though none of the commentaries do so).

Something of philosophical importance does follow from these grammatical niceties. If one does interpret the compound *tathāgatagarbha* as a *tatpuruṣa*, the *bhāṣya* would here have to be translated "all living beings are the embryo of the Tathāgata"—and this suggests something very different from the claim that all living beings *have* the embryo of the Tathāgata. The former is the stronger claim: if all living beings have as their defining characteristic Buddhahood *in potentia*, then the claim that all living beings will inevitably become Buddha will usually also be pressed, and along with this will go a concomitant ontological or metaphysical devaluation of the obstacles to becoming Buddha. If, on the other hand, one interprets verse 37 to say that living beings possess the embryo or germ of the Tathāgata, then it remains possible to deny that all beings will become Buddha and to give the defilements and passions that might prevent them from becoming so a more prominent place. For on this reading, the knots in the cloth, the rainclouds in the path of the sun's rays, and the cataracts in the eye are all real, damaging, and potentially preventive of awakening.

On balance, acknowledging that I, like my texts, am doing no more than coloring space, I judge that the MSA-corpus probably intends to affirm the second position. To say that all living beings possess *tathāgatagarbha* is only to say that there is a possibility that they might become Buddhas; it is in no sense to minimise the reality of evil, of *kleśa-* and *jñeyâvaraṇa*, of *mamatva*, and of the importance of the path of religious practice designed to remove them. The MSA-corpus is a long distance, then, from Sino-Japanese theories of original awakening (*hongaku*); and in this I judge it to be on both safer and more properly Buddhist ground.

68 *de bzhin gshegs pa yang de rnam par dag pa'i ngo bo nyid yin te/ de'i phyir sems can thams cad ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po can*, DT sems-tsam PHI 156b7-157a1 (*bhāṣya* on MSA IX.37). On this grammatical issue see David S. Ruegg, "The *gotra*, *ekayāna* and *tathāgatagarbha* Theories of the Prajñāpāramitā According to Dharmamitra and Abhayākaragupta," in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems*, ed. Lewis Lancaster (Berkeley, 1977), 283-312, especially 287-288. MS IX.37 appears also in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and the discussion of the compound *tathāgatagarbha* given there (... *tathāgatas tathatâiṣāṃ sarvasattvānām iti*, E. H. Johnston, *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānôttaratantraśāstra* [Patna, 1950], 71 [i.148]) supports the interpretation of *tathāgatagarbha* as a *bahuvrīhi*—and this interpretation is supported also by the Tibetan translation using the possessive particle *can*.

Buddha Nature as Myth

William G. Grosnick

Most religious traditions are grounded in a mythic view of reality. Underlying them is a set of assumptions regarding the nature of reality which are empirically unverifiable, but which are accepted on faith by those religions' adherents as unquestionable truths. Whether they be assumptions about what is out there in the cosmos, such as myths of spirits, powers, sacred personages, personal gods, or primordial beings, or else assumptions about how the cosmos operates, such as myths of cosmic order, divine intervention, sin and punishment, or righteousness and reward, religious traditions are full of ideas about reality that most people accept, not because the truth of those ideas has been empirically confirmed in some way, but because their culture has put forward those ideas as authoritatively true.

These mythic conceptions are of great value in human life; they provide a shared framework for making intellectual and moral sense of nearly every aspect of reality, whether it be occurrences in the natural world, events of human history, or the more personal happenings of an individual's life. And they also provide a framework for making emotional sense of the world, frequently by establishing a more positive picture of reality than some of our actual human experience would seem to warrant. Indeed, the rosy picture of life that myth provides is one of the main reasons people cling so tenaciously to the myths of their culture. Whether it be the myth of a just and loving God, Whose creation of the world guarantees that life is an ultimate good, and Whose judgment of that world guarantees that justice and righteousness will be established, or the myth of the more impersonal Brahman, whose very existence as the ultimate substratum of reality guarantees that at the basis of all is a state of being characterized by peace and bliss, or the myth of the even more impersonal Tao, which, as the harmonious process by which all

things operate, guarantees that the primordial balance of the cosmos will never be upset, it seems that most of the world's religious traditions contain myths that provide an emotionally satisfying vision of reality.

Historically speaking, few religious traditions have been particularly cognizant of the mythic dimension of their teaching—most traditions (and, of course, most people), generally do not recognize the distinction between a mythic assumption and an empirically verifiable proposition. At the same time, however, some traditions seem to be more amenable to the acceptance of myth than others. For example, Christianity, because of its emphasis on such things as faith and revealed truth, leaves wide scope within its tradition for the functioning of myth.

Other traditions are not so open to myth. Indeed, one world religion in particular seems downright hostile to myth. That religion is Buddhism, which seems to insist that the path to liberation depends on seeing reality as it is, unclouded by illusions of any sort, including mythic notions of benevolent gods or primordial processes. Buddhism appears unique among world religions in its willingness to acknowledge the unpleasantness of the world that religious myths so frequently manage to hide. Whereas most religious myth affirms the goodness of life, frequently by expounding its relationship to some eternal ground of being, early Buddhism insisted that when one sees life as it really is, one realizes that it is unsatisfactory *(duḥkha)*, transitory *(anitya)*, and without any permanent self as its basis *(anātman)*. It was a fundamental tenet of Buddhism that one should devote oneself to freeing one's mind from the two kinds of obstacles—the passions and the obstacles which obstruct knowledge *(kleśa-* and *jñeyâvaraṇa)*—that prevent one from seeing reality as it is. All Buddhist traditions held that people are constantly in danger of falsely conceiving illusory realities on the basis of their emotional predispositions—as one text points out, beings impute reality to certain things simply on the basis of their desirability or loathsomeness.[1] So there is a basic stance taken in Buddhism that is fundamentally opposed to the acceptance of emotionally appealing visions of reality.

Indeed, from earliest times it was not just emotionally appealing world views, but virtually all formal frameworks for interpreting reality that were rejected by Buddhist tradition, which called them useless "views" *(dṛṣṭi)* or "pointless metaphysics" *(prapañca)*. And after the vast outpouring of Prajñāpāramitā literature, it was accepted in the Mahāyāna tradition, at least, that any act of conceptualization whatsoever produced illusion. So even Buddhist concepts like nirvāṇa and saṃsāra were seen as potentially dangerous to the goal of seeing reality as it is and thereby becoming liberated. The goal of Mahāyāna Buddhism became the practice of *avikalpajñāna*, "nondiscriminative wisdom."

It is difficult to imagine a religion more antipathetic to mythic conceptions than this. Nevertheless, I would like to argue not only that Buddhism has a mythic dimension, but also that its mythic dimension is extremely important to its soteriological function. In so doing, I will confine my investigation to the mythic dimen-

1 *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Taishō 31, 824b4-5.

sion of the Mahāyāna Buddhist notions of the Buddha Nature (*buddhadhātu*) and *tathāgatagarbha*, two closely related ideas originating from the Mahāyāna idea of universal Buddhahood. There are undoubtedly many other concepts in Buddhism that could be characterized as myth, such as the ideas of the workings of karma and rebirth, or idealized conceptions of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and arhats—so many, in fact, that it would be well beyond the scope of this paper to investigate them all. Still, it is hoped that even this limited investigation will help to shed light on the importance of myth in Buddhism as a whole.

In suggesting that the ideas of Buddha Nature and *tathāgatagarbha* are primarily mythic conceptions, I am speaking primarily of the articulation of these two concepts in the earlier Mahāyāna literature, in sūtras like the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*,[2] *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*,[3] *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*,[4] and the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*,[5] to name just a few, and to a somewhat lesser extent in the only Indian commentary devoted to the *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature theories, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.[6] In later commentaries like the *Buddha Nature Treatise* (*Fo-Hsing Lun*)[7] and the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*,[8] not to mention scores of other Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan commentaries, efforts to interpret the *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature in terms consistent with the antimythic bias of Buddhist tradition are clearly in evidence. So, for example, the *Buddha Nature Treatise* defines the Buddha Nature as the "absolute nature of reality" (*chen-ju, tathatā*) revealed by the twin emptinesses of self and dharmas,"[9] thus defining Buddha Nature in terms of the clear vision of reality unclouded by illusion that is the traditional, antimythic Buddhist position. But in the earlier articulation in the sūtras, Buddha Nature and *tathāgatagarbha* are not defined this way. I would like to argue that the terms "Buddha Nature" and "*tathāgatagarbha*" are used in the earlier sūtras in a more mythic sense.

The earliest articulation of the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the origin of the idea of Buddha Nature is found in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*. In the opening section of this sūtra the Buddha is shown manifesting his powers by causing a myriad of flowers to appear in the sky, each with a seated Tathāgata inside. As the assembly watches, the flowers fade and the Tathāgatas begin to shine brighter and brighter. When asked the meaning of this, the Buddha replies that he has shown them this in order to preach the *vaipulya-sūtra* called the "*tathāgatagarbha*". Later, he declares to the listeners that the meaning of this display and the essential purport

2 Taishō 16, nos. 666-667.
3 Taishō 12, no. 374-376.
4 Taishō 1, no. 120.
5 Taishō 12, no. 353.
6 Taishō 31, no. 1611.
7 Taishō 31, no. 1610.
8 Taishō 32, no. 1667.
9 Taishō 31, 787b4-5.

of his teaching is that "beings are always *tathāgatagarbhas*."[10] That is, like the flowers which enclose Buddhas within their calyxes, beings always harbor Buddhahood within themselves. That Buddhahood is hidden by a covering of defilements (*kleśakośa*), just as the petals of flowers hide the figures of the seated Tathāgatas. This idea of universal Buddhahood was later given a slightly different expression in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, which proclaimed that "Buddha Nature exists in all beings" (*asti buddhadhātur sarvasattveṣu*), a proclamation perhaps better known through its Chinese translation, "all beings universally possess Buddha Nature."[a]

There are two closely interrelated reasons why the statements "all beings are *tathāgatagarbhas*" and "all beings universally possess Buddha Nature" should be regarded primarily as proclamations of myth. First of all, while they give the appearance of being statements of fact, these statements are not really empirically verifiable propositions, but rather statements of faith or conviction. They are presented in the early *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature literature as truths proclaimed by authority to be accepted on faith, and when one scrutinizes them, one begins to sense that no amount of empirical evidence would suffice to disprove these propositions, at least to the minds of their adherents. And second, the primary function of these two statements is the typically mythic function of presenting a positive model of reality, an optimistic assessment of human prospects in the cosmos. The statements proclaiming the *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature portray the nature of human beings in such a positive way that beings who previously lacked confidence in themselves will presumably be inspired to pursue the supreme Buddhist goal of Buddhahood.

Why is the proclamation that all beings universally possess Buddha Nature not an empirically verifiable proposition? To answer this question it is important to clarify what is being asserted in this statement. Is it simply a statement that all beings have the capacity for Buddhahood, or is it a statement of the nature of that capacity? In the later literature it is clear that the statement was understood in the latter sense, for, depending on the text, Buddha Nature was variously identified as emptiness, or the nonduality of subject and object, or the unoriginated nature of the mind, truths that the Buddhist tradition held to be verifiable through direct personal experience. And in this later literature, a careful effort was then made to explain how the realization of those truths could help one toward Buddhahood. But in the early literature, the statement that all beings possess Buddha Nature seems to be little more than a simple affirmation of the capacity of all beings for enlightenment, and this was not presented as a verifiable truth by the early tradition.

Generally speaking, the early texts do very little to explain what Buddha Nature is in itself, and when they do make some rudimentary effort to explain it,

10 The whole verse reads: *eṣā kulaputrā dharmāṇāṃ dharmatā/ utpādād vā tathāgatānām anutpādād vā sadaivaite sattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ*. This may be translated: "This, good sons, is the essential purport of all dharmas. Whether or not Tathāgatas appear in the world, beings are always Tathāgatas." Quoted in Takasaki Jikidō, *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei* (Tokyo, 1974), 43.

they really do not succeed in doing anything more than reassert that all beings have the capacity for enlightenment. Notice, for example, the following passage from the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, which ostensibly tries to explain what Buddha Nature is: "The sentient being is himself Buddha Nature. Why? Other than by a sentient being, supreme, perfect enlightenment cannot be obtained."[11] The passage really does nothing to explain why a sentient being is able to attain Buddhahood.

Sometimes the early literature even makes apparently contradictory statements in its effort to further delineate Buddha Nature. Witness the following passages from the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the first of which identifies Buddha Nature with the vices of sentient beings, the second of which identifies Buddha Nature with the virtues of Buddhahood:

> O good sons. All the bonds of ignorance and *kleśas* are Buddha Nature. Why? Because they are the cause of Buddha Nature. Out of ignorance and *kleśas* there come about the five virtuous aggregates.[12]

> Why do we sometimes say sentient beings do not yet have Buddha Nature? All sentient beings do not yet have all of the *buddhadharmas* (the powers and virtues of Buddhahood) or (the four *guṇapāramitās* of) eternality, bliss, true selfhood, and purity.[13]

Though the passages seem to present opposite interpretations of what Buddha Nature itself might be, they share the conviction that all beings will ultimately attain Buddhahood, and that, I submit, is all that is really being asserted in the early literature.

Given that the statement that all beings possess Buddha Nature is a simple restatement of the capacity of all beings for enlightenment, why is this not an empirically verifiable proposition? I would like to argue that it is not really being presented as a proposition that could be established or refuted by evidence, but rather as an article of faith.

To begin with, there are strong indications that the authors of the early *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature literature themselves considered that Buddha Nature was something to be accepted on the basis of faith and authority rather than on the basis of empirical evidence. For example, a passage from the "Tathāgata Nature" chapter of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* says that "all *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* ought to arouse faith in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* in order to realize that they personally possess the *tathāgatagarbha*."[14] And a passage from the *Ratna-*

11 Taishō 12, 568c29-569a1.

12 Taishō 12, 571b29-c2.

13 Taishō 12, 572b21-22.

14 Taishō 12, 887b21-23.

gotravibhāga states categorically that the *buddhadhātu* "is not accessible to imagination nor to discrimination. It is accessible only to faith."[15] Basing itself upon the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* further argues that even bodhisattvas of the ten highest stages cannot fully understand the *tathāgatagarbha*; it is a sphere of knowledge accessible only to an omniscient Buddha.[16]

There is another interesting passage in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* which also makes the Buddha the ultimate authority behind the teaching that all beings possess Buddha Nature. In it the Buddha declares, "O good sons. I have always said, 'All beings possess Buddha Nature.' I said this according to my own will. All beings are not cut off and do not perish until they attain supreme, perfect enlightenment."[17] The phrase "according to my own will" means that the teaching of universal Buddha Nature is not put forward as a form of *upāya*, a teaching device which might be false or deceptive in some way because it is designed to correct some specific error to which a particular kind of person might be prone. That would be a teaching made "according to the will of another." Rather, the Buddha is claiming that the proclamation that all beings possess Buddha Nature is made in accordance with his own faultless vision of reality. It is presented, as it were, as an utterance made *ex cathedra*.

Another indication that the assertion that all beings have the capacity for enlightenment was treated as an article of faith rather than as an empirically verifiable statement is that when some of the early sūtras expounding Buddha Nature have an opportunity to seriously examine the possibility that some beings might be so depraved that they have completely lost the capacity for enlightenment, those sūtras seem to completely ignore that possibility. Contrary evidence is simply disregarded. An illustration of this can be found in the story of Aṅgulimāla, found at the beginning of the Mahāyāna version of the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*, an early sūtra which was greatly influenced by the Buddha Nature teaching of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. Aṅgulimāla is as infamous a brigand as one could imagine—he cuts off the fingers from each of his victims and adds them as trophies to a headdress that he wears. At the dramatic moment portrayed in the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*, he has already completed a headdress of 999 fingers and is about to collect his one-thousandth finger by killing the Buddha himself, after the latter interrupts Aṅgulimāla as he is plotting to murder his own mother. If there were ever a person unlikely to be a candidate for Buddhahood it would be Aṅgulimāla. Not only is he so cruel as to contemplate killing his own mother, he is also about to commit the most heinous crime in Buddhism, the murder of a Buddha. If ever there were evidence that some beings do not have Buddha Nature, this would be it.

15 Taishō 31, 839b13-15; Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra): Being A Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Rome, 1966), 296.

16 Taishō 31, 840b11.

17 Taishō 12, 573c19-21.

But the sūtra does not take this opportunity to ask whether Aṅgulimāla has the capacity for Buddhahood. Indeed, instead of treating Aṅgulimāla's criminality as serious evidence that he might not be capable of enlightenment, the sūtra seems almost to go out of its way to manufacture evidence of his capacity for Buddhahood by telling a story of Aṅgulimāla's previous life. According to this story, Aṅgulimāla was a virtuous and obedient young man named Vartamāna whose only mistake lay in rejecting the adulterous advances of his teacher's ardent young wife. Enraged, the young woman avenged herself by constructing elaborate evidence that Vartamāna had raped her. When his venerable teacher returned to discover this evidence, he predicted that Vartamāna would be reborn as a brigand who collects the fingers of his victims until the karmic effects of his evil actions were exhausted. Ever obedient, Vartamāna accepted his teacher's prediction and was reborn as Aṅgulimāla.[18]

The story is rather insipid, but it manages in its way to give Aṅgulimāla some of the virtuous roots that the Buddhist tradition thought were necessary for the attainment of Buddhahood. Had the sūtra taken seriously the possibility of Aṅgulimāla's incapacity for enlightenment, it might have told a story of previous lives filled with heinous deeds. But this would have meant that the sūtra would have had to find some way of reconciling the idea of universal Buddhahood with the powerful myth of karma, which insists that evil deeds necessarily bring with them evil retribution. That the sūtra fails to do this is evidence that it does not consider the assertion of universal Buddha Nature to be a statement subject to empirical investigation. Rather, the sūtra adheres to the idea of universal Buddha Nature as an unquestionable dogma, which is to say, as a myth.

The second major reason why the idea of universal Buddha Nature should be regarded as a myth is that its primary function is to present a positive picture of reality. Unlike an empirical proposition, which attempts to present an accurate description of the way things are, the proclamation of universal Buddha Nature attempts to present a humanly meaningful picture of the way things are. The real significance of the statement "all beings universally possess Buddha Nature" lies in the sense of hope and confidence that the proclamation can convey, hope and confidence that are desperately needed by people who have lost the sense that their lives are meaningful.

Hope and confidence do not spring from the rational side of one's personality. One cannot arouse hope by rationally contemplating the world as it is; it is too full of suffering and evil. And one cannot arouse confidence by rationally assessing the content of one's character; one only discovers that one is too ignorant, too confused, or too broken. But myth is something that harnesses the deeper irrational side of the personality. It appeals to the instinctual side of human beings, which expresses itself in emotion-laden images. To a human being plagued by thoughts of inferiority or unworthiness, the image of the Buddha within is a numinous one, an image that can convey a sense of real personal worth.

18 Taishō 1, 512b23-c19.

The *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature literature shows that the tradition was highly conscious of the importance of Buddha Nature teaching for building confidence in those who might have doubts about their capacities. For example, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* responds to the question, "Why has the Buddha declared that the essence of Buddha (*buddhadhātu*) 'exists' in every living being?"[19] by saying,

> If someone has not heard of this teaching,
> He may, out of cowardice or a sense of inferiority
> Blame himself for all sorts of failings
> So that the aspiration for enlightenment never arises in him.[20]

It is also clear from the early sūtras that the proponents of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching believed that one could derive real power from the thought that one possesses Buddha Nature. For example, a passage from the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* says that "in order to overcome ignorance and immorality," a bodhisattva should think, "I possess Buddha Nature, and am like a stalwart warrior in battle, a general in the midst of his army, or a crown prince," and thereby "overcome any thoughts of inferiority."[21] Another passage from the same sūtra proclaims that one can derive power to overcome the feeling that one is overwhelmed by *kleśas* by recalling the Buddha Nature within:

> Although one has *kleśas*, it is as if one were without *kleśas*. Thereby one can benefit the whole world of men and gods. Why? Because one fully understands that one personally possesses Buddha Nature.[22]

When one looks at the earliest articulation of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* one can also sense that the tradition was aware that the real importance of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching lay in the promise that it offered to those whose lives seemed hopeless. When one looks at some of the metaphors used in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* to illustrate the *tathāgatagarbha*, one can sense the vivid contrast that is being drawn between the straitened circumstances of people's actual life and the promise of potential Buddhahood. The *tathāgatagarbha* is likened, among other things, to pure gold that has fallen into a pit of impurities,[23] to a treasure hidden under the house of a poor man,[24] to a jeweled statue of the Buddha covered by tattered and worn-out rags,[25] and to a world-conquering king hidden in

19 Taishō 31, 840b29-c1; Takasaki, *A Study*, 305.
20 Taishō 31, 840c13-16.
21 Taishō 12, 885a18-22
22 Taishō 12, 414c10-12.
23 Taishō 16, 458a24.
24 Taishō 16, 458b10.
25 Taishō 16, 458c15-16.

the womb of a poor, husbandless woman who is unattractive, wears dirty clothes, and dwells in a poor hovel.[26] These metaphors do not just convey an image of something good that is hidden, they also focus on the wretchedness of that which obscures the good. It does not seem an exaggeration to say that the Buddha Nature teaching was aimed at the wretched of the earth. It may be that the myth of the universal Buddha Nature had the same sort of appeal as the Christian myth of God's special concern for the sinners or for the poor. But in any case, it seems likely that the devotees of the early *tathāgatagarbha* literature, like the devotees of the *Lotus Sūtra*, came from the lower strata of society.

A point worth stressing is that by its emphasis on faith in one's Buddha Nature, the early *tathāgatagarbha* tradition was probably taking a very different approach to the question of salvation than one finds in the rest of the Indian Buddhist tradition. Whereas the more traditional path system of Buddhism emphasized that salvation, or more correctly liberation, came with one's ability to reach and sustain a clear and unclouded vision of reality (a goal attainable only by the sharpest of intellects),[27] here it was being suggested that liberation comes when one assumes a certain faith stance—faith in one's Buddha Nature. This seems to be a more universally attainable goal. Instead of having to train oneself to see the world as it is, unclouded by myth, one is being asked to see the world with mythic vision, imbued with new significance.

To be sure, the later Buddhist tradition never classified faith in one's possession of Buddha Nature as a form of liberation. Indeed, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* relegated faith in one's Buddha Nature to the lowest, most preliminary stages of the path by treating it as a prerequisite for the cultivation of *bodhicitta*, while assigning the liberation that comes from an unclouded vision of reality to the highest stage of Buddhahood.[28] But that sort of scholastic systematization misses the real existential significance of the Buddha Nature teaching to the common, ordinary people who were that teaching's devotees. One suspects that, like the disciples described in the *Lotus Sūtra* who danced for joy when they heard predictions of their future Buddhahood,[29] the devotees of the early *tathāgatagarbha* literature may have been similarly transported when they heard it proclaimed that they too possessed the Buddha Nature. They may have paid lip service to the cultivation of the clear, unclouded vision of reality on the *darśana-* and *bhāvanāmārgas*, but one doubts that they ever experienced those higher stages of the path. For them, as for most people, it was probably salvation enough just to find the faith and hope to keep on going.

26 Taishō 16, 459a7. The mention of the dirty clothes and poor hovel are found in a commentary on each of the metaphors in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. See Takasaki, *A Study*, 275.

27 This is an ability developed during the practice of the paths of insight (*darśanamārga*) and cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*).

28 See Takasaki, *A Study*, 205-206, 265-267, 307-309.

29 See, for example, Leon Hurvitz, *The Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York, 1976), 39-40, 56, 90, 164, 173, etc.

Myth is a dimension of Buddhism that has received insufficient study. One of the reasons for this is undoubtedly the aforementioned rationalistic, antimythic bias of the Buddhist tradition itself, best illustrated perhaps by the later period of Indian Buddhist development, with its emphasis on epistemological questions of perception and inference and on the rational analysis of the structures of consciousness. But this rationalistic approach to religion seems to have appealed primarily to intellectuals and to have lacked the sort of popular emotional appeal that only myth seems able to provide. It is perhaps worth noting that as the myth of Buddha Nature disappeared from the logical texts of later Indian Buddhism, the Buddhist tradition itself began to die out. At the same time, the myth of universal Buddha Nature began to capture the East Asian imagination and Buddhism began to flourish there. A question Buddhists and scholars of Buddhism might ask themselves is whether the Buddhist tradition might not have sometimes underestimated the importance of myth, not only to Buddhism's avowed goal of universal salvation, but also to its very survival as a religion.

Chinese Characters

a 一切衆生悉有佛性

Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood—The Universal Buddha of the San-chieh-chiao[a]

Jamie Hubbard

> The Essence of the Buddha (*tathāgatagarbha*) in a living being represents an eternal, immutable (*asaṃskṛta*) element, which is identical with the monistic Absolute and is unique and undifferentiated in everything that exists. [E. Obermiller, 1931.[1]]
>
> Tathāgatagarbha thought is not Buddhism ... it is *dhātu-vāda*, the object of Śākyamuni's criticism. [Matsumoto Shirō, 1986.[2]]

These two statements aptly characterize a frequently contested issue in the discussion of *tathāgatagarbha* and the closely related ideas of Buddha Nature (*buddha-dhātu, fo-hsing*[b]) and original enlightenment (*hongaku*[c]). Matsumoto, deliberately provocative, has once again called attention to the similarity between the extremely

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1 Ernst Obermiller, "The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation, Being a Manual of Buddhist Monism, the Work of Ārya Maitreya with a Commentary by Āryāsaṅga," *Acta Orientalia* IX (1931), 104.

2 Matsumoto Shirō, "Nyoraizō shisō wa bukkyō ni arazu," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 35/1 (1986).

positive language used of enlightenment in the *tathāgatagarbha* literature, and that of the substantial monism found in the non-Buddhist ātman/brahman traditions.[3]

Another problem, not as often discussed in contemporary studies of *tathāgatagarbha*, is that the emphasis on the positive and all-pervasive essential nature of the Tathaagata tends to create a gulf of nonrelation between the realms of enlightenment and deluded existence—whereas the truth of the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to exist as the highest perfection of bliss, permanence, self, and purity, the defilements are of a different character altogether, unrelated in any way, merely adventitious. As with all such absolute bifurcation, this raises the difficult question of relation, of how movement between the two states is possible: in terms of the Buddhist goal, how can a person living in a deluded state ever turn towards or reach the state of purity? Thus the status of the individual and of his or her acts prior to enlightenment are also questioned. If authentic existence is admitted solely of the fully realized realm of enlightenment, in what meaningful sense can we speak of historical individuals, their social and economic differences, personal psychologies, and emotional struggles?[4] What validates the practice of the deluded?

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3 Matsumoto is not the only one to have noted this resemblance. Several scholars see monism in the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* and in the Mahāyāna in general. See, for example, various comments in works by Takasaki Jikidō: *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra): Being A Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Rome, 1966), 28; *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei* (Tokyo, 1974), 761-763; "Hosshin to ichigenron nyoraizō shisō no hō kannen," in *Hirakawa Akira hakase kanreki kinen ronshū: bukkyō ni okeru hō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1976), 221-240. Others have seen monism in the Mādhyamika concept of emptiness, for example Th. Stcherbatsky: *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa* (Delhi, 1978), 73; *Buddhist Logic* (2 vols., New York, 1962), I.509. Obermiller applied this notion of a monistic absolute to the *tathāgatagarbha* literature; see "Sublime Science." And still others have seen the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as diametrically opposed to the Mādhyamika and representing something akin to the monism of the ātman/brahman tradition. See Etienne Lamotte, *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (London, 1976), lxxvi-lxxxi. Some simply voice their doubts and state that this tradition seems similar to post-Vedic forms of monism; see Nagao Gadjin, "What Remains in Śūnyatā: A Yogācāra Interpretation of Emptiness," in *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Minoru Kiyota (Honolulu, 1978), 81, n.35; David S. Ruegg, *La théorie du tathāgatagarbha et du gotra: étude sur la sotériologie et la gnoséologie du bouddhisme* (Paris, 1969), 2, 4, 366ff.; E. H. Johnston, *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānôttaratantraśāstra* (Patna, 1950), xii-xiii. Finally, another camp is able to understand *tathāgatagarbha* thought without recourse to non-Buddhist notions by placing it squarely within the Buddhist tradition of conditioned causality and emptiness, a tradition which, of course, explicitly rejects monism of any sort. See Yamaguchi Susumu, *Hannya shisōshi* (Tokyo, 1956), 86-87; Ogawa Ichijō, *Nyoraizō busshō no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1969), 18-21—following the commentary to the *Ratnagotra* by rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen.

4 Sallie B. King, in explicating the *Buddha Nature Treatise*, has written: "In sum, as presented in the *BNT*, the person (human being) in the deluded existential mode is not a person as we ordinarily use the term in the popular Western sense. There is no real historicality or individuality accruing to the person, and precious little freedom. What we consider to be the basis of individual personhood is written off as unreal. What is real is the universal sameness of Buddha nature; in this sameness, individual personhood, as we ordinarily use the term, cannot be found. Thus, before 'conversion' and while in the existential mode of delusion, a person is not a person." *After* enlightenment, however, "history and individuality, which were lacking in the deluded existential mode, enter the constitution of the

[note continues]

This, in turn, fuels forms of absolutism (found especially in East Asia) such as the so-called 'sudden teachings' of the Chinese schools,[5] or the existential conundrum presented in the teachings of *mo-fa*[d] Buddhism, the Buddhism of the final period of the dharma, the time in which all beings are characterized by delusion. How can there be a real notion of a path of practice that traverses such mutually disjunctive states as the purity of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the defilements of the beings living in the age of *mo-fa*? All that remains is a leap, apparently as sudden as it is ineffable. The San-chieh-chiao ('Sect of the Three Stages'), fully engaged with the existential predicament of the final period of the dharma, attempted to validate the conventional, pre-enlightened practice of deluded sentient beings within this context of the absolute purity of the *tathāgatagarbha.*

The San-chieh-chiao

The San-chieh-chiao has long been considered a practice-oriented Buddhist sect, similar in many ways to the Pure Land movement. The San-chieh-chiao assessment of humankind's capacity and nature in the final period of the dharma is comparable to that of the Pure Land—both teach that beings living in this final period are incapable of traditional bodhisattva practice. However, just as the masters of the more abstract philosophical systems of Buddhist thought also taught meditational practices (Chih-i and Fa-tsang, for example, did not think of their systems as simply theoretical abstractions), so also San-chieh-chiao doctrine emerged within the general theoretical context of Sui-T'ang Buddhism; this background, as well as its unique orientation, is clearly expressed in the teaching of the refuge of the Universal Buddha (*p'u-fo*[e]).

This teaching is less well known than that about the final period of the dharma, and is more clearly related to the 'theoretical' schools: T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen,

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person ... the particular behaviors, mannerisms, and even the personality of the person now possess reality and value." ("Buddha Nature and the Concept of the Person," *Philosophy East and West* 39 [1989], 164.) In this reading, as true to the tradition as to the crosscultural philosophy of Professor King, of what concern is the *unreal* behavior, mannerisms, and personality of the deluded *non*-person? This doctrinal attitude has recently been singled out by Hakamaya Noriaki, in several articles, as the basis for individual and social discrimination and racism. See, for example, "Sabetsu jishō o umidashita shisōteki haikei no kansuru shiken," *Komazawa daigaku bukkyōgakubu kenkyū kiyō* 14 (1987), 198-216.

5 The disjunction between practice and realization is most often raised in terms of the so-called 'sudden-gradual debate.' Good discussions of the issues involved can be found in the essays in Peter N. Gregory, *Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu, 1987). Tao-sheng, for example, perhaps most well-known for his insistence on the universality of Buddha Nature, is also known as the first to advocate a theory of sudden enlightenment. See Whalen W. Lai, "Tao-sheng's Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined," in ibid., 169-200. Lai argues that it was not Buddha Nature theory but rather the *ekayāna* thought of the *Lotus Sūtra* that spurred Tao-sheng's subitism (191).

and San-lun. In short, together with the radically pessimistic outlook present in the doctrines about the final period of the dharma, the San-chieh-chiao has a universalistic view which emphasizes the nondual nature of the relations between the *dharmadhātu* and all phenomena. One aspect of this is the basic identity between living beings and the enlightened nature of the Buddha. In this we find the basis of the soteriology of the San-chieh-chiao, the "universal practice" of the "universal dharma", the practice deemed suitable for living beings in the final period of the dharma. As with other schools of Sui-T'ang Buddhism, we see in the San-chieh-chiao a link between doctrine and practice which seems often to be overlooked in the Sino-Japanese commentarial tradition, a tradition which tends to be more often content with neat, albeit sectarian, distinctions.

The Refuge of the Universal Buddha

The refuge of the Universal Buddha is the first of seven items which relate the practices appropriate for each of the three periods:[6] (1) refuge of the Buddha; (2) refuge of the dharma; (3) refuge of the saṅgha; (4) the practice of saving all living beings; (5) the practice of eliminating evil; (6) the practice of cultivating virtue; and (7) the practice of seeking spiritual friends.[7] The first item, the refuge of the Buddha, is taught differently for each of the three stages. In the first period, when living beings have the capacity only for the single vehicle (*ekayāna*), it is said to be threefold: (a) the truth body of the *ekayāna* Buddha; (b) the assumed body of the *ekayāna* Buddha; and (c) the images (statues and so forth) of the Buddha.[8] In the second period, when living beings have the capacity for the three vehicles (*triyāna*), the refuge of the Buddha comprises (a) the assumed body of the *triyāna*, meaning the various incarnations of the Buddha including that of Śākyamuni; and (b) the images of the Buddha.[9] There are five kinds of Buddhas which are appropriate refuges in the third period, when the capacity of living beings for practice and

6 See *Tui ken chi hsing fa*[f], in Yabuki Keiki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1974), appendix, 111ff. The Universal Buddha is also described as the first of two items in the teaching of Universal Respect (see *Tui ken chi hsing fa,* ibid., 131-132). As I was finishing this manuscript I received an offprint of an article by Okabe Kazuo, "Sangaikyō no Buddakan"; in this article Okabe also presents some of the more interesting corollaries of the doctrine of the Universal Buddha.

7 The first three are taught as the refuge of the universal Buddha and the last four are said to correspond to the "four universal vows of the bodhisattva" (*Tui ken chi hsing fa,* Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 114-116). In fact, all seven items include actual practice, as seen in the fact that the first six are the same as the first six of the sixteen practices of the inexhaustible storehouse (*Ta ch'eng fa chiai wu chin tsang fa shih*[g], ibid., 174).

8 *Tui ken ch'i hsing fa*, ibid., 111. On these bodies see Nagao Gadjin, "On the Theory of Buddha-Body (Buddha-Kāya)," *Eastern Buddhist* 6/1 (1970), 38, n.19.

9 *Tui ken ch'i hsing fa,* Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 113.

realization is virtually nil. Among these five are to be found both false saviours and the true essence of Buddhahood; it is the latter which gives validity to the former:

> (1) The first item is the image of the Buddha. Merely open the eyes and they are visible; close the eyes and they are gone; there is no distinction between the true and the false. It is as taught in the *Kuan fo san mei hai ching*[h].[10]
>
> (2) The false Māra Buddhas taken as refuge by the twelve types of living beings who are fully accomplished in the twelve types of false views, widely explained in the sūtras and dhāraṇīs as the ninety-six types of heterodox paths.
>
> (3) The True Buddhas taken for refuge by the living beings who are fully accomplished in the twelve types of correct views, as extensively explained in the *Larger Sūtra on the Buddha's Name* and in the various Mahāyāna sūtras.
>
> (4) All of the false Māra Buddhas [who teach] the views of existence and emptiness, and which are produced by all of the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas in accommodation [to the needs of living beings]; these are extensively taught in the various Mahāyāna sūtras as the accommodation bodies.
>
> (5) The universally true and universally correct Buddha, which is explained in four sections:
>
> > (i) *Ju-lai-tsang fo*[i] (Tathāgatagarbha Buddha) as extensively taught in the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra*, the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*, and the *Nirvāṇasūtra*.
> > (ii) *Fo-hsing fo*[j] (Buddha-Nature Buddha), as extensively taught in the *Nirvāṇasūtra*.
> > (iii) *Tang-lai fo*[k] (Future Buddha), as taught in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*.
> > (iv) *Fo-hsiang fo*[l] (a Buddha Perceived as a Buddha), as taught in the *Avataṃsakasūtra* and the *Daśacakrakṣitigarbhasūtra*.[11]

10 Taishō 15, 690a-693a. This is a reference to the Buddha's image, taught for those living beings of later ages when no Buddha will appear in the world. I have not been able to find this reference in the Taishō text, though virtually every visualization ends with the line, "if the visualization is thus, it is a correct visualization; if it is different, it is called a false visualization." This would seem to contradict the San-chieh-chiao position.

11 *Tui ken chi hsing fa*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 114-115.

Why are the false saviours put on an equal footing with the true Buddhas? Simply put, it is because the living beings of the third period are incapable of distinguishing right from wrong, true from false. The San-chieh-chiao literature frequently enjoins the practitioner to abandon sectarian distinctions, and their position may be summed up by saying that living beings in the final period dare not attempt judgments about either doctrinal or practical matters—far better to rely on the universal dharma and to celebrate everything as sacred. One text describes the ignorant beings of the final period of the dharma picking and choosing among the Buddha's teachings, and compares these actions to giving a dangerous weapon to a blind person—he or she is bound to hit innocent bystanders, cause great injury, and incur great harm.[12] This, of course, opposes the path elucidated by those who taught refuge in the Buddha's pure land, concentrating effort on the saving power of a single Buddha. The San-chieh-chiao taught that superior beings with capacity for the single vehicle can make such distinctions without harm, but for living beings of the final period of the dharma the result of exclusive reliance on a single Buddha as the most efficacious is to slander all the other Buddhas as less so, thereby causing harm rather than profit.

The four universally true and correct Buddhas are further detailed in a text recovered from Tun-huang, the *P'u fa ssu fo*[m].[13] Only three leaves in length, this text takes as its scriptural authorities a number of Mahāyāna texts: the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*, the *Ghanavyūhasūtra*, the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra*, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* and the *Daśacakrakṣitigarbhasūtra*.

A Ju-lai-tsang fo

Of these texts the *P'u fa ssu fo* lists the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*, the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra*, and the *Ghanavyūhasūtra* as its scriptural authorities for the teaching of the *Ju-lai-tsang fo*, the "Tathāgatagarbha Buddha." Another probably influential text is the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* ; but it is not mentioned, perhaps because it is a śāstra and the San-chieh-chiao literature relies exclusively upon sūtras as authorities.

The *Śrīmālādevī*[14] is clearly one of the most important texts in the history of *tathāgatagarbha* thought. A text that expounds the single vehicle, it is a major

12 *Tui ken chi hsing fa*, ibid., 139-140.

13 *P'u fa ssu fo*, ibid., 201-206. This text, part of the Stein Collection, is known to have been composed some years after the death of Hsin-hsing in 594 because it refers to the *Ghanavyūhasūtra* which was not translated until the latter half of the seventh century. However, although this particular text is a later composition, the four aspects of the universal Buddha and the texts that they are based on (except, of course, the *Ghanavyūha-sūtra*) are mentioned in other works considered by most scholars to be the writings of Hsin-hsing, for example the Horyūji mss. of the *San chieh fo fa*[n], 293-295; *Tui ken chi hsing fa*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 103, 132; *Tun-huang San chieh fo fa*, ms. 22, etc.

14 The *P'u fa ssu fo* relies on Gunabhadra's translation of the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*, made in 436 (Taishō 12, 217-223). In particular this text quotes from the "Chapter on the Dharmakāya,"

[note continues]

source of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, which is the primary systematization of *tathāgata-garbha* thought. Among the doctrines taught in the *Śrīmālādevī* which bear upon the San-chieh-chiao teaching of the universal Buddha are the pure and impure aspects of the mind,[15] the *garbha* as *śūnya* and *aśūnya* (devoid of *kleśa* but endowed with the Buddhadharmas which are inseparable from the *dharmakāya*),[16] and the dependence of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa upon the *garbha*.[17] With regard to this last point, Takasaki observes that the *Śrīmālādevī* gives no explanation of why or how the adventitious *kleśa* come to obscure the *garbha*, and this in turn leads to the problem of what is meant by postulating a relationship of dependence between saṃsāra/nirvāṇa and the *garbha*.[18] This is a problem to which I shall return below.

Among the many theories taught in the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra*[19] two are related to the concept of the *Ju-lai-tsang fo*: (1) as above, the *Laṅkā* teaches that all paths of existence are generated by the *tathāgatagarbha*;[20] and (2) it teaches that the *tathāgatagarbha* is the same as the *ālayavijñāna*.[21] This second point is shared by the third text quoted, the *Ghanavyūhasūtra*,[22] wherein it is taught that the *ālaya* manifests the myriad dharmas,[23] and that the *ālaya* and the *tathāgatagarbha* are neither the same nor different.[24]

As might be expected from the sources utilized, as well as from its name, the *Ju-lai-tsang fo* is the San-chieh-chiao teaching of *tathāgatagarbha*, and within the *P'u fa ssu fo* we find the two doctrines mentioned above, namely that all phenomena are dependent on the *tathāgatagarbha* and that the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *ālaya* are identical. Within the scholastic circles of Chinese Buddhism, theories about the *ālaya* and its nature as well as theories about Buddha Nature and the *tathāgatagarbha* were continuously being put forth, argued, and refined, particularly during the Sui-T'ang period. Though it is within this context that the San-chieh-chiao theories originated, my study here is limited to the San-chieh-chiao theories about the concept of universal dharma as related to the practice of universal respect.

Takasaki has said that he feels the doctrine of the identity of the *ālayavijñāna* and the *tathāgatagarbha* was the result of the inability of the theory as stated in the

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the "Chapter on Intrinsic Purity," the "Chapter on the One Truth," and the "Chapter on the One Refuge."

15 *Prakṛtipariśuddhicitta* and *upakliṣṭacitta*. Takasaki (*A Study*, 37) states that these terms are comparable to *cittaprakṛti* and *āgantukakleśa* in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

16 Taishō 12, 221c. This relates to the entire positive thrust of the *tathāgatagarbha* literature, which is critical of excessively negative understandings of emptiness and emphasizes instead the positive existence and virtues of Buddhahood.

17 Taishō 12, 222b.

18 Takasaki, *A Study*, 38.

19 The *P'u fa ssu fo* used the four-chüan *Laṅkā* (Taishō 16, 479-514) translated by Gunabhadra in 443, especially the "Chapter on all the Buddha's Words."

20 Taishō 16, 510b.

21 Taishō 16, 512b.

22 Taishō 16, 776a

23 Taishō 16, 751ff.

24 Taishō 16, 766ff.

Ratnagotravibhāga to satisfactorily account for the relation between the *tathāgatagarbha* and the 'adventitious' defilements which are nonetheless dependent upon it.[25] This so-called weak point in the theory was rectified by the incorporation of the *ālayavijñāna* into the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. There were certain similarities which made such a merger relatively easy. Just as within the Vijñānavāda tradition the *ālaya* was seen to be the base (*āśraya*) of all phenomena, so, within the theory of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the *tathāgatagarbha* itself was considered to be the base (*āśraya*) of all phenomena. The important difference, of course, is that in the Vijñānavāda the *ālaya* was transformed in wisdom and no longer remains, while the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition tends to speak of 'arithmetical subtraction' of the adventitious defilements, a subtraction which reveals the purity that has always existed.[26]

The two doctrines did come together in such texts as the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra* and the *Ghanavyūhasūtra*. From a reading of the appropriate sections in the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra*[27] it appears that when the *tathāgatagarbha* is in a state of defilement, involved in the discriminating function of the *manas*, it is called the *ālayavijñāna*. The *ālaya*, though fundamentally pure,[28] is also the source of false discrimination, the hallmark of saṃsāra, as a result of the individuating function of the *manas*. Thus the *P'u fa ssu fo* states:

> With regard to the conditions and marks of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the true and the false are eternally dependent upon each other, neither separate nor distinct. Therefore the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra* states in a simile that [the *ālaya*] is like the expansive ocean and waves.[29]

This is a reference to the *Laṅkā* which compares, in the following terms, the relation between the *ālaya* and phenomena to that between the ocean and its waves:

> The Blessed One said this to him: "Mahāmati, the *tathāgatagarbha* holds within it the cause for both good and evil, and by it all forms of existence are produced. Like an actor it takes on a variety of forms, and [in itself] is devoid of an essence and what belongs to it .... Because of the influence of habit-energy that has been accumulating since beginningless time, what here goes under the name of the *ālayavijñāna* is accompanied by the seven *vijñānas* which is like a great ocean in which the waves roll on permanently but the [deeps remain unmoved; that is, the *ālaya*]

25 Takasaki, *A Study*, 59-60.

26 See Nagao, "'What Remains'," 75-77; Takasaki, *A Study*, 59-60.

27 Taishō 16, 510b.

28 Taishō 16, 510b.

29 *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 202.

> body itself subsists uninterruptedly, quite free from fault of impermanence, unconcerned with the doctrine of ego-substance and thoroughly pure in its essential nature.[30]

The ocean-wave analogy, together with the statement that the "*tathāgatagarbha* produces all forms of existence", brings us to the second point with regard to the *Ju-lai-tsang fo*: the relation of the *tathāgatagarbha* to the phenomenal world. Scholars and exegetes alike consider the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra*, the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra* and the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* together the locus classicus for what is referred to in the Hua-yen commentarial tradition as arising by suchness or *tathāgatagarbha*.[31] This theory teaches the dependence of all phenomena upon *tathatā* or *tathāgatagarbha*, and Yabuki believes that the theoretical construct of the San-chieh-chiao doctrine of the *Ju-lai-tsang fo* is precisely the same.[32] Indeed, in addition to the passage from the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra* cited above, the *P'u fa ssu fo* quotes two passages from the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra* which are often cited as authority for this theory: "The *Śrīmālādevīsūtra* teaches that saṃsāra is dependent on the *tathāgatagarbha*"[33] and "the *tathāgatagarbha* is the foundation, the support and the substratum[34] [of the Buddha-dharmas as well as the worldly dharmas]."[35]

Although I have doubts that these passages actually reflect the San-chieh-chiao theory of the universal Buddha,[36] traditionally this is taken to mean simply that the *tathāgatagarbha*, being equivalent to *śūnyatā*, is the 'base' or 'foundation' of phenomena inasmuch as it is the absence of a *svabhāva* (which is what *śūnyatā* means) that allows the possibility of co-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*). There is no 'substance' from which phenomena arise, and in spite of the analogy of the ocean and the wave, the *tathāgatagarbha* is not a material cause of co-arising as is the case with the ocean and the waves. This analogy is simply trying to explain the nondual nature of the relationship between phenomena and truth; it is not trying to postulate

30 Suzuki Daisetz, *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (London, 1966), 190. Although Suzuki's translation is made from the Sanskrit, it agrees with the Chinese. See Taishō 16, 510b.

31 *Ju-lai hsing-ch'i*[o]; *chen-ju hsing-ch'i*[p]. See Tamaki Kōshirō, "Kegon no shoki ni tsuite," in *Indo tetsugaku to bukkyō no shōmondai* (Tokyo, 1951), 281-309; Takasaki Jikidō, "The *Tathāgatotpattisaṃbhava-nirdeśa* of the Avataṃsaka and the Ratnagotra—with Special Reference to the Term *tathāgata-gotra-saṃbhava*," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 7 (1958), 348-343.

32 Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 406.

33 *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*, Taishō 12, 222b. Quoted in the *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 201.

34 This passage is also quoted in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (Takasaki, *A Study*, 292), and Takasaki gives the following Sanskrit equivalents for "substratum": *niśraya*, *ādhāra*, and *pratiṣṭhā*.

35 *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*, Taishō 12, 222b. Quoted in the *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 202.

36 There are many problems with the use of this term (*ju-lai hsing-ch'i*) to describe the theories of the San-chieh-chiao, not the least of which is that it is a later theory. If Yabuki is correct then the influence of the San-chieh-chiao on the Hua-yen school must be re-evaluated.

a first cause or material cause of co-arising.[37] So it is declared that the two aspects of the pure and the impure, the true and the false, or the *tathāgatagarbha* and phenomena are, like the ocean and the waves, interdependent, neither different nor the same. In this context the *P'u fa ssu fo* states:

> The truth of the *dharmadhātu* produces the delusion of the *dharmadhātu*, and so delusion is dependent upon truth. However, truth is not independent and is eternally dependent upon delusion; delusion does not arise independently, because it is dependent upon truth. Yet, the *tathāgatagarbha* and all of saṃsāra, the essence and the marks, are always the same. Again, the *tathāgatagarbha* and the names and forms of the *dharmadhātu*, the essence and the marks, are always distinct just as dust and moisture are always distinct. Thus they are not different and also not not-different.[38]

Therefore we can conclude that the theory of the Tathāgatagarbha Buddha is basically the San-chieh-chiao view of the relation between the realm of truth and the world of delusion, a relationship expressed in the conventional Buddhist terms of nonduality.

B Fo-hsing fo

The San-chieh-chiao theory of *Fo-hsing fo*, or the 'Buddha-Nature Buddha' is for the most part based upon the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*,[39] a pivotal text in the Chinese development of the concept of the potential for enlightenment present in all living beings. The *P'u fa ssu fo* teaches that there are no fundamental differences between the concept of Buddha-Nature Buddha and that of the Tathāgatagarbha Buddha:

> Together with the former concept of *Ju-lai-tsang fo*, as *yen*[q] and *mu*[r] are different names [but both mean 'eye'], with regard to

37 The question of substantive monism arises here, and, as pointed out above, many scholars have discussed the *tathāgatagarbha* in terms of a monistic theory. The following quotation, which employs the gold/ornament analogy so often used to support a theory of material unity (e.g., *Chāndogyôpaniṣad* VI.1), makes one question if such a nondualistic Mādhyamika interpretation of *tathāgatagarbha* was truly widespread, especially in China.

38 *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 201.

39 The *P'u fa ssu fo* relies upon the version in 40 chüan, translated by Dharmakṣema in about 420 CE. See Taishō 12, 365ff.

> conditions there is a slight difference in meaning [between *Fo-hsing fo* and *Ju-lai-tsang fo*].[40]

What is meant by "with regard to conditions there is a slight difference" is that whereas the Tathāgatagarbha Buddha refers to the relation between the *dharma-dhātu* and the phenomenal world, the Buddha-Nature Buddha describes the *dharmadhātu* as identical with the basic nature of the *sattvadhātu.* This fundamental nature of living beings (*sattva*) is characterized as "pure, without *kleśa*, truly abiding, and undefiled by *kleśa*."[41]

As articulated in the *P'u fa ssu fo*, the Buddha-Nature Buddha corresponds to the teaching of *chen-yin fo-hsing*[s], i.e., the 'true cause' Buddha Nature as found in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra.* Among the many different characterizations of Buddha Nature in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, one of the more common is that which speaks of two kinds of Buddha Nature, the true cause and the associate cause.[42] The San-chieh-chiao Buddha-Nature Buddha corresponds to the former:

> The second item is *Fo-hsing fo.* Some schoools talk of the *li-hsing*[t] [principle-nature], others of the *hsing-hsing*[u] [acquired nature].[43] Some speak of the *yin-hsing*[x] [cause-nature], and others of the *kuo-hsing*[y] [result-nature]. Now, in clarifying this we only rely on the 38th chüan[44] of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* which teaches the true-cause Buddha Nature. Therein it states

40 *P'u fa ssu fo*, ibid., 203.

41 *P'u fa ssu fo*, ibid., 203. Similarly, the early usage of the term *buddhadhātu* (most often the Sanskrit original for Buddha Nature, *fo hsing*) was used interchangeably for *tathāgatagarbha.* See William G. Grosnick, "The Zen Master Dōgen's Understanding of the Buddha-nature in Light of the Historical Development of the Buddha Nature Concept in India, China, and Japan," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1979), 22-26.

42 For example, *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Taishō 12, 531b, 532b, 535b, etc.

43 No doubt as a result of the ambiguity of the sources, Chinese scholars have endlessly debated different schemata of Buddha Nature, as well as, once a particular schema was granted, what actually corresponds to the 'primary nature' (the mind, or perhaps living beings themselves), the 'secondary cause', and so forth. Chi-tsang's *Ta cheng hsüan lun*, for example, lists eleven different theories of the North-South periods. See Aaron K. Koseki, "Chi-tsang's 'Ta-ch'en-hsüan-lun', the Two Truths and the Buddha-Nature," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1977), 202ff; Mochizuki, *Bukkyō daijiten* (Tokyo, 1921), 4456. Just as earlier discussions of Buddha Nature probably reflected the Chinese need to harmonize the disparate teachings of emptiness in terms such as 'inherently pure mind', later the concepts of *li-fo-hsing*[v] and *hsing-fo-hsing*[w] were advocated by K'uei-chi (632-682 CE), the founder of the Fa-hsiang school, probably as a solution to the contradiction between the concepts of *gotra* and Buddha Nature. This is similar to the relation between the '*gotra* existent by nature' (*prakṛtisthagotra*) and the '*gotra* acquired through effort' (*paripuṣṭa-* or *samudānitagotra*) referred to in the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra* and elsewhere. See especially *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra* III.4 and *bhāṣya* thereto: Sylvain Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra: exposé de la doctrine du grand véhicule selon le système yogācāra* (2 vols., Paris, 1907-11), I.11.

44 A mistake for the 28th chüan (e.g., Taishō 12, 531b-c, 532b, etc.).

> that all of the *dharmadhātu* and the *sattvadhātu*, ordinary men as well as sages, have this nature, as do all of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.[45]

Thus, in the more theoretical expositions of the San-chieh-chiao, the emphasis was on the universal basis or nature of all living beings rather than their individual or particularly acquired nature. Indeed, the text later quotes the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* to the effect that the Buddha-Nature Buddha is none other than "the emptiness of ultimate meaning" (*paramārthaśūnyatā*), which is the middle path between the empty (*śūnya*) and the non-empty (*aśūnya*).[46] Buddha Nature was conceived as equally the nature of Buddhas and ordinary beings, and it existed in an undefiled state, eternal and pure.[47] However, the situation is more subtle; the text continues:

> From the side of the result the name is established as Buddha Nature, however this Buddha Nature is neither cause nor result—within the cause it is [termed] cause, within the result it is [termed] result.[48]

What this probably means is that the "emptiness of ultimate meaning," conceived as the nondual relation of the middle path, as the emptiness of self and dharmas, or as *tathatā*,[49] is the true cause of the attainment of the fruits of Buddhahood. This is because emptiness is both the object of wisdom and enables all change and therefore the transformation of the basis from ignorance to wisdom.[50] However, the dependent nature of truth in all living beings is not affected by its environment (as is also said by the *Ju lai tsang fo* discussed above). This applies to *icchantikas* as well as Buddhas, and so Buddha Nature is really neither cause nor result; that is, the *principle* or *attribute* of emptiness is not the

45 *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 203.

46 *P'u fa ssu fo*, ibid., 203-204. Cf. Taishō 12, 523b. Chi-tsang and Chih-i also taught a middle-path interpretation of Buddha Nature. See Grosnick, "Dōgen's Understanding," 130-135, and n.12 above.

47 This text also borrows from the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* in attributing to the Buddha Nature the four *guṇapāramitās* of permanence (*nitya*), pleasure (*sukha*), self (*ātman*), and purity (*śubha*): *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 203. See also Takasaki, *A Study*, 38.

48 *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 203. This is a reference to the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Taishō 12, 524a. See also the 'Southern' version, Taishō 12, 768b.

49 *P'u fa ssu fo*, ibid., 205.

50 This is the traditional understanding of *tathāgatagarbha* in terms of emptiness. It is found in the *Ratnagotra*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, and other texts of the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition. It of course begs the question as to whether or not the emptiness (or non-emptiness) taught in the *Ratnagotra* is the same emptiness as that taught in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, in Nāgārjuna's works, and in other early Mādhyamika texts—the long-running debate over whether to classify *tathāgatagarbha* doctrines as *neyârtha* or *nītârtha* is just one indication of deep ambiguity.

same as either the Buddha who realizes that principle, or as the attendant virtuous qualities of practice that enable such a realization.[51] So the section of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* which discusses "neither cause nor result" actually states that ultimate truth is analogous to a cause when considered as Buddha Nature, but comparable to a result when considered as nirvāṇa.[52] It is also likened to the twelve links of dependent co-arising, which are both cause and result (depending upon where one starts in the chain).[53]

Finally, the Buddha-Nature Buddha is considered to be restricted to living beings:

> It is said that this nature [the true cause Buddha Nature] is possessed in common by all beings of the *dharmadhātu*, ordinary as well as wise, excluding only the grasses, trees, walls, broken tiles, etc. These beings have no Buddha Nature.[54]

The text then quotes a passage from the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* in support of this contention:

> That which is without Buddha Nature is the ground, the trees, gravel, and rocks. That which is other than these nonsentient things is all called Buddha Nature.[55]

This question was the center of much debate during the Sui-T'ang period, and the San-chieh-chiao, in denying Buddha Nature to nonsentient beings, seems to agree with the position generally ascribed to the Hua-yen school.[56] However, if we recall that the nondual relation between *tathatā* and phenomena in general, with no distinction made between sentient and nonsentient, was articulated in the concept of the Tathāgatagarbha Buddha, we can also see that this distinction, like much in

51 See Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 417. Chi-tsang (549-622 CE) also taught that Buddha Nature is neither cause nor result, though he had a different view as to whether nonsentient phenomena possess Buddha Nature. See Koseki, "Chi-tsang's 'Ta-ch'en-hsüan-lun'," 209-217 and 379. Chi-tsang's avowal of nonsentient Buddha Nature might simply be a matter of terminology, though, as he did distinguish the capacity of the sentient for realization of that principle (ibid., 226ff.).

52 Taishō 12, 524a. Discussions of cause and result were not restricted to the Chinese tradition. Classical Indian and Tibetan masters, as well as modern scholars have extensively discussed the cause/result structure of the *tathāgatagarbha* and *buddhadhātu* concepts, especially with regard to the 'three *svabhāva*' which the *Ratnagotra* adduces to explain the statement, "All sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*." See, for example, Ogawa, *Nyoraizō busshō*, 75-79; Ruegg, *La théorie*, 291-296.

53 Taishō 12, 524a.

54 *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 205.

55 *P'u fa ssu fo*, ibid., 205. *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Taishō 12, 581a. Cf. Taishō 12, 828b.

56 Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 418-420.

San-chieh-chiao doctrine, must be understood in terms of its soteriological meaning. That is, the term *Fo-hsing fo* refers to that which has the potential for *realization* of Buddhahood.[57] It is in this context, I believe, that some Buddhologists would translate the term Buddha Nature as 'enlightenment potential.' Although an understanding of Buddha Nature in terms of emptiness leads inexorably to affirming the Buddha Nature of the nonsentient, the origins of the concept in theories of an inherently pure mind and in the *ekayāna* tradition, concerned as this latter is with the nature and scope of the realization of Buddhahood, bespeak a tradition concerned fundamentally with the nature of the sentient, and only by implication and incidentally with the nature of all phenomena.

Thus, from a soteriological point of view (and there is no doubt that the primary concern of the San-chieh-chiao is with the salvation of living beings, especially those of inferior capacity) a schema which separates the capacity for enlightenment of living beings from that of nonliving beings is entirely appropriate. The defilements which obscure that purity which is natural to the mind (*cittaprakṛti*) are a problem with relevance only to living beings, and so a discussion of the potential for enlightenment of nonsentient objects can never be more than idle talk. Indeed, as pointed out by the San-lun master Chi-tsang, the nonsentient is, perforce, not deluded.[58] Hence, a soteriological doctrine whose aim is the realization of the fruits of Buddhahood would be one which is directed primarily at those for whom a discussion of salvation has meaning—that is, living beings.

The many discussions of the 'how' of Buddha Nature were always grounded in the main theoretical concerns of the various schools arguing the point. It is not surprising then, that just as the San-lun tended to see Buddha Nature primarily in terms of the middle path (and so affirmed the Buddha Nature of the nonsentient), the San-chieh-chiao saw Buddha Nature primarily in terms of its meaning for the beings of the third period, and in describing the relation between living beings and truth, the operative term used by them was *Fo-hsing fo*, meaning 'potential for enlightenment' (or even, as we shall see, 'actualized potential for enlightenment'); this term embraces the ignorant as well as the wise, though it excludes the world of nonsentient objects.

C Tang-Lai fo

So far we have been discussing the principles which describe the relation between *tathatā* and all phenomena and *tathatā* and the realm of living beings. Becoming more concrete in its articulation of this relation, the *P'u fa ssu fo* uses the *Sad-*

57 This is similar to Hui-yüan's distinction between "the nature which knows" and "the nature which is known." See Grosnick, "Dōgen's Understanding," 138ff. Grosnick further speculates that it was confusion stemming from the judgment that the original of *fo-hsing* was *buddhatā*, and that it was thus somehow different from *dharmatā* (*fa-hsing*[z]) that gave rise to this distinction (ibid., 139).

58 Koseki, "Chi-tsang's 'Ta-ch'en-hsüan-lun'," 226.

dharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra as the basis for the *Tang-lai fo* or 'Future Buddha'. The future Buddha is a name for the inevitable realization of Buddhahood by all living beings:

> The conditions arise because of the essence; the conditions and practices are all the practices of the *tathāgatagarbha*; the conditions are the practices which are all the true practices of Buddha Nature. The tree includes the bud and the true includes the false, and so all practices are those of the universal bodhisattva of the *ekayāna*; with the full completion of the practices the fruits of Buddhahood are realized. Because the Tathāgatagarbha Buddha and the Buddha-Nature Buddha exist within the bondage [of ignorance] and the realm of causality, in the future there is [the possibility] of realizing Buddhahood. Therefore this is termed the 'Future Buddha'.
>
> We rely on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, which teaches that the Bodhisattva Never Despise worshipped equally all among the four classes of beings because they [all] possess the true essence of the *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature. Therefore he said: "You all practice the path of the bodhisattva and in the future will become Buddhas." Thus [this aspect] is termed 'Future Buddha'.[59]

Thus we have moved from the theoretical aspect of the relationship between *tathatā* and phenomena to an articulation of the inevitable realization of Buddhahood in this world. As all living beings possess Buddha Nature, all are one day assured of realizing Buddhahood: it is this that is called *Tang-lai fo* by the San-chieh-chiao.

D Fo-hsiang fo

The fourth and final aspect of the refuge of universal Buddha is based on the *Avataṃsakasūtra*[60] and the *Daśacakrakṣitigarbhasūtra*,[61] and is termed *Fo-hsiang fo* or 'a Buddha Perceived as a Buddha'. This aspect refers to the fact that although all living beings are destined to realize Buddhahood in the future, when they are viewed from the perspective of their nature as described above they are *already* Buddhas. The *P'u fa ssu fo* states:

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59 *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 205. See also *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, Taishō 9, 50c.

60 Taishō 9, 395ff. Specifically, this refers to a passage from the "Chapter on Clarifying the Dharma," Taishō 9, 459c.

61 Taishō 13, 681ff.

> Because all living beings in the *dharmadhātu* are the same as the Tathāgatagarbha Buddha, the Buddha-Nature Buddha, and the Future Buddha, the marks [i.e., living beings] are not different from the true Buddha, and this is called *Fo-hsiang fo* .... The *tathāgatagarbha* is the same as the Buddha-Nature Buddha and the Future Buddha; they are one and not two, therefore you should respect all with the thought that they are the true Buddha, and this is termed *Fo-hsiang fo*.[62]

Rejecting all distinctions based upon limited understanding and partial criteria such as whether a particular being keeps the precepts or not, we are told to respect all living beings as no different from the Buddha. So, based upon the implications of the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* presented in the various scriptural sources, the San-chieh-chiao moved from an abstract theory of the relationship between *tathatā* and phenomena to a very concrete view of all living beings as present Buddhas. It was this universal teaching which gave rise to the concepts of universal dharma and universal respect, concepts which were believed to be uniquely suited to the capacity of the living beings of the third period and which are hallmarks of the San-chieh-chiao. The practical innovation of the San-chieh-chiao is precisely its concrete notion of living beings as future Buddhas and even as Buddhas in the present, while its exposition of the difference between Tathāgatagarbha Buddha and Buddha-Nature Buddha reflects the discussion of these issues in the debates of their time.

Universal Practice

The universalism found in virtually all San-chieh-chiao writings combines with teaching about the decayed capacity of living beings to form the central thrust of San-chieh-chiao practice. A good example of this is found in the *Tui ken chi hsing fa*:

> The first item, the universality of the essence, refers to the *tathāgatagarbha*, Buddha Nature, and the eightfold Buddhadharma.[63] The second item, the universality of practice, has

62 *P'u fa ssu fo*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 205-206.

63 The "eightfold Buddhadharma" is the eight items that comprise the teaching on universal respect (*Tui ken chi hsing fa*, 131-132; cf. *Hua yen wu shih yao ten wa*, Taishō, 45, 532bff). The eight are: (1) *tathāgatagarbha*; (2) the universally true and correct Buddha; (3) the markless and nameless Buddhadharma; (4) the essential Buddhadharma which removes all views; (5) the Buddhadharma which eliminates all discussion of the path; (6) the Buddhadharma of one person and one practice; (7) the Buddhadharma of no person and no practice;

[note continues]

> seven sections [among these the first is]: (1) the coextension of the common person and the sage means that without questioning, whether someone is common or a sage, both should be seen as producing the true understanding of the sage. Why is this? Because all of the true Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the *ekayāna* appear as all types of living beings in response [to the needs of beings]; all of the common people of the *ekayāna* who have perfected correct views and violate neither the views nor the precepts give rise to the vow to appear as every type of living being [so as to benefit all living beings]; all common beings of the *ekayāna* who have perfected correct views, who violate the precepts but not the views, actually appear as every type of living being .... Therefore, both should be seen as producing the understanding of the sage, without question of whether they are common or sage. Thus this is called Universal Sage.
>
> Regarding the universality of the common person, all of the false demons transform their appearance and manifest themselves as the image of the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas—but the common person is blind from birth and cannot discriminate [between the true and the false]. He or she can only hope to treat all living beings as the same and respect them equally as the Tathāgatagarbha [Buddha], Buddha-Nature Buddha, Future Buddha, and a Buddha Perceived as a Buddha. They do not dare to try to distinguish which is the true Buddha. Why is this? Because the common person is ignorant and unable to distinguish between [the true Buddhas and] the false demons. Therefore, this is termed the universal common person.[64]

As with the refuge of the fourfold Buddha, this means that from the absolute viewpoint all beings are manifestations of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the 'universality of the essence'. In the third period, when living beings are trapped by twisted delusions of righteousness, purity, morality, and virtue, the proper course of action is that all beings be viewed in their essential nature. This is because, first, on the absolute level all things essentially partake of the true nature of the *dharma-dhātu*; and, second, on the relative level, we are incapable of distinguishing good from evil, and so it is better to avoid the danger of false slander. As already pointed out, it is better not to give dangerous weapons to the blind for fear that they might accidentally kill someone.

(8) the Buddhadharma of the five nonoppositions. All of these items enjoin one to look at the essence and the unity rather than at the outward appearance of diversity.

64 *Tui ken chi hsing fa*, Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 129-130.

The fullness of the San-chieh-chiao implementation of the universal dharma, however, is seen more in the 'recognition of evil' which complements the recognition of the universally pervasive Buddha Nature. This not-one, not-two relation, described in the refuge of the Universal Buddha, is not a simple unidirectional reductionism. Nonduality is not monism. At the same time as the universality of the pure nature is proclaimed, the particulars of the manifestation, i.e., the degenerate living beings of the third period, are not overlooked.[65]

So the corollary to the practice of universal respect is that the living being of the third period is told to view him or herself as thoroughly evil, recognizing his or her own capacity as inferior to that of all other sentient beings:

> As the sixth item [of the above seven subdivisions of the universality of practice] relates the Buddhadharma of one person and one practice. 'One person' refers to seeing oneself as an evil person. 'One practice' is as taught in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīkasūtra*, wherein the Bodhisattva Never Despise cultivated only one practice, that of respecting everyone other than himself as the Tathāgatagarbha [Buddha], Buddha-Nature [Buddha], Future Buddha, and a Buddha Perceived as a Buddha.[66]

Thus the teaching of 'recognizing evil' is the other side of universal respect. Similarly, at the same time as we are exhorted to revere all living beings with the thought that they are fully enlightened Buddhas, we are also told to "save all living beings," an activity that would not be necessary if the phenomenal fact of suffering living beings was lost in a monistic blurring of the essential and absolute 'truth.'[67]

Conclusion

One of the frequent charges leveled against the notion that all living beings possess the nature of a Buddha is that it leads to precisely the sort of position taken by the San-chieh-chiao, which is that all beings are Buddhas *at this very moment*. Such a position can be judged to obviate the need for practice as well as to deny the facts of ignorance and suffering, and so to result in a lack of integrity at both the personal and social levels. The San-chieh-chiao, however, does seem clearly to have under-

65 The San-chieh-chiao notion of the universal dharma, however, did not lend itself to such a recognition of the relevance of specific teachings, and the strident criticism evident in their 'one-way' hermeneutic is often cited as the reason for their suppression.

66 *Tui ken chi hsing fa*, ibid., 131-132.

67 Okabe, "Sangaikyō no Buddakan," 270.

stood that nonduality does not necessarily entail a flight into a thoroughly nonspecific realm, but may fully and simultaneously include the world of discriminated phenomena, including ignorance and suffering. A recognition of one's own deficiencies is what allows the possibility—indeed the necessity—of religious practice. In the case of the San-chieh-chiao, this practice was turned toward an increased awareness of the need for austerities, with particular emphasis on begging and charity. When coupled with the radical interrelatedness of all beings and all phenomena as described in the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, this emphasis led to the establishment of the Inexhaustible Storehouse, one of the more spectacular examples of a Buddhist charitable institution.[68]

This is where we must find the importance of the San-chieh-chiao teaching about the Universal Buddha. It does not lie in the teachings about the coextensiveness of *tathāgatagarbha* and the phenomenal world, nor in the distinction between sentient and nonsentient Buddha Nature. Inasmuch as the general outlines of these doctrines were accepted by most schools, specific differences seem little more than scholastic quibbles, born of a need to adjust the terms of the *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature traditions into those of one's own lineage. The unique contribution of the San-chieh-chiao is its response to the dilemma of simultaneous belief in universal Buddha Nature and the dawning of the age of the final dharma. The nature of the dilemma is mirrored in the solution, which is a combination of universal respect (for the essentially enlightened nature of all phenomena) and recognition of evil (of one's own deluded existence in the final period of the dharma).

Finally, however, the San-chieh-chiao was unable to escape the absolutist tendencies of its time. Although the Universal Buddha seems to be an inclusive doctrine, the school also taught that any other approach was tantamount to slandering the dharma. Its practice even included institutional separation, effected by building walls between its own adherents and others inside the monasteries. This, together with an insistence upon the idea that only the San-chieh-chiao doctrine of the universal dharma could be relevant, is often cited as the major reason for the frequent suppressions they incurred. So in the end, while advocating a practical solution to the bifurcation of truth and phenomenal reality, the theoretical structure of that solution remained essentially absolutist. Inasmuch as *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature thought form the basis of that theoretical structure, we return full circle to the question posed at the beginning—is *tathāgatagarbha* thought Buddhist?

Chinese Characters

68 On this Inexhaustible Storehouse see Jamie Hubbard, "Salvation in the Final Period of the Dharma: The Inexhaustible Storehouse of the San-chieh-chiao," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1986).

a 三階教
b 仏性
c 本覚
d 末法
e 普仏
f 対根行機法
g 大乗法界無尽蔵法釋
h 観仏三昧海経
i 如来蔵仏
j 仏性仏
k 当来仏
l 仏想仏
m 普法四法
n 三階仏法
o 如来性起
p 真如性起
q 眼
r 目
s 正因仏性
t 理性
u 行性
v 理仏性
w 行仏行
x 因性
y 果性
z 法　性

Luminous Mind Among the Logicians—An Analysis of *Pramāṇavārttika* II.205-211

Roger R. Jackson

Introduction

In his masterwork on *tathāgatagarbha* theory, David Seyfort Ruegg rightly remarks that "the notion of a pure and immaculate (*amala*) consciousness is well attested among the Buddhist logicians who are considered by doxographers as adherents of Cittamātra who do not admit an *ālaya(vijñāna)*."[1] On the other hand, it is equally evident from his ensuing discussion of the notion in the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti that a "pure and immaculate consciousness" is nowhere near as important to these logicians as it is to the authors of the most important mainstream Yogâcāra sūtras and śāstras, or of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its commentaries.

1 "La notion de la connaissance pure et immaculée (*amala*) est bien attestée chez les logiciens bouddhistes, qui sont considérés par les doxographes comme des tenants du Cittamātra qui n'admettent pas l'*ālaya(vijñāna)*." David S. Ruegg, *La théorie du tathāgatagarbha et du gotra: étude sur la sotériologie et la gnoséologie du bouddhisme* (Paris, 1969), 431.

The reason for this, of course, is that both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti focus most of their attention on matters of *pramāṇa*—the nature, types, and problems of authoritative cognition—rather than on matters of soteriology and ontology; and it is when the latter are being considered that discussions of a "pure and immaculate consciousness" most often arise.

Indeed, a quick survey of the texts discussed by Ruegg in his section on "The Natural Luminosity of Thought"[2] reveals that the pivotal concept of a "luminous mind" (*prabhāsvaracitta*) whose defilements are adventitious (*āgantuka*) is most often employed in an explicitly soteriological context. The famous passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* that may mark the concept's earliest appearance specifies that "This mind, O monks, is luminous; and yet it is defiled by adventitious defilements,"[3] and goes on to say that the mind is freed from adventitious defilements when an *ārya* disciple (*ariyasāvako*) knows it as it is (*yathābhūtam*). The Theravādin commentaries equate this luminous mind with the *bhavaṅga*, the mental substrate.[4] The *Laṅkâvatārasūtra* equates it with the *tathāgatagarbha*, the "matrix of the *tathāgata*," or Buddha Nature that elsewhere in the sūtra is equated with the store consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*, in which there must occur a "basic transformation" (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) of one's awareness. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* equates it with "non-mind" (*acitta*) which is unalterable and unconceptualizable, neither existent nor non-existent, hence, according to Haribhadra's later gloss, equivalent to emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* equates it with the ultimate nature of things, *dharmatā*. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* equates it with such notions as nonconceptuality, space, the *tathāgata*-sphere, the "basic transformation," etc. The *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra* equates it with the cognition of *dharmatā*. Candrakīrti equates it, it appears, with the natural luminosity of *dharmas*, hence with their natural pacification and nonorigination, i.e., *śūnyatā*. Prajñākaramati, commenting on *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 2:1, equates it with the *bodhicitta*, which is free from extreme views and impurities throughout the three times.[5] The common theme among these various contextualizations of the concept of luminous mind seems to be that it is understood as referring to the mind's *ultimate* nature and/or its *liberated* state. The context, thus, is primarily ontological and soteriological, and few or no implications are drawn for "conventional" epistemology—even when it is explicitly admitted that luminosity is the nature of *defiled* minds too.

It is now generally recognized that although their central concerns may have been epistemological, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti did also have soteriological

2 "La Luminosité Naturelle de la Pensée."

3 *pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ/ taṃ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ/* R. Morris et al., *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (6 vols., London, 1885-1910), I.10.

4 Ruegg, *La théorie*, 411, n.1. For further references to "Hīnayāna" occurrences of the concept (in, e.g., the Pāli canon and commentaries and among the Mahāsāṅghikas) see André Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule* (Saigon, 1955), 67-68; Ruegg, *La théorie*, 411-412; Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakoça de Vasubandhu* (6 vols., Paris, 1923-31), IV.299, n.1; Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* (Cambridge, 1982), 246-247.

5 Ruegg discusses these texts and their statements on luminous mind in *La théorie*, 413-430.

interests.[6] Indeed, the contexts in which they discuss the mind's natural purity and luminosity are explicitly focused on ultimate and salvational matters. Dignāga, for instance, discusses in two minor treatises[7] an immutable consciousness (*nirvikāra-vijñāna*) or naturally pure gnosis (*jñānaprakṛtivyavadānika*) that comes under the influence of ignorance (*avidyā*) and thus manifests in itself differentiated or illusory forms;[8] presumably, the elimination of the distorting ignorance should result in a reversion to the mind's original resplendence. Dharmakīrti asserts that the mind is naturally luminous and its stains adventitious at *Pramāṇavārttika* II:208b,[9] in the midst of a discussion of the irreversibility of an *ārya*'s realization of no-self.[10] It is on Dharmakīrti's use of the concept of the mind's luminosity that I wish to focus in this article. I do so because although the context in which Dharmakīrti uses the concept appears to differ little from the ontological and soteriological ways in which other Buddhists have used it, a closer examination of the text and its commentaries reveals that for Dharmakīrti the mind's luminosity has not only soteriological importance, but importance also for our understanding of the conventional operations of the mind, i.e., for precisely that epistemological enterprise to which Dharmakīrti devoted the bulk of his labors. This, in turn, has important implications for our understanding of Dharmakīrti's overall attitude toward knowledge and truth, and these may be fruitfully—if cautiously—compared with other Buddhist attitudes, and some Western ones, as well.

6 On this see especially Ernst Steinkellner, "The Spiritual Place of the Epistemological Tradition in Buddhism," *Nanto bukkyō* 49 (1982), 1-18; Roger R. Jackson, "The Buddha as *Pramāṇabhūta*: Epithets and Arguments in the Buddhist 'Logical' Tradition," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16 (1988), 335-365.

7 The *Traikālyaparīkṣā*, which is, in Ruegg's words, "a sort of elaborate paraphrase on a portion of the Sambandhasamuddeśa of the Prakīrṇakānda of Bhartṛhari" (*La théorie*, 431), and the *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍârthasaṅgraha*, a text, as the title indicates, concerned with wisdom about ultimate reality.

8 Ruegg, *La théorie*, 431-434.

9 I am following here the verse numbering of Miyasaka's edition of the *Pramāṇavārttikakārikā* and the chapter ordering recognized by the Tibetan commentarial tradition (*Svārthānumāna*, *Pramāṇasiddhi*, *Pratyakṣa*, *Parārthānumāna*). See Miyasaka Yusho, "Pramāṇavārttika-Kārikā: Sanskrit and Tibetan," *Acta Indologica* 2 (1972), 1-206. For a discussion of the issue of chapter ordering, see, e.g., Jackson, "Buddha as *Pramāṇabhūta*," 361, n.16.

10 Ruegg, *La théorie*, 435-437.

The Text

Sanskrit[11]

ukto mārgas tad abhyāsād āśrayaḥ parivartate// [205b]
sātmye 'pi doṣabhāvaś cen mārgavan nāvibhutvataḥ/ [206a]
viṣayagrahaṇaṃ dharmo vijñānasya yathāsti saḥ// [206b]
gṛhyate so 'sya janako vidyamānâtmaneti ca/ [207a]
eṣā prakṛtir asyās tan nimittântarataḥ skhalat// [207b]
vyāvṛttau pratyayâpekṣam adṛḍhaṃ sarpabuddhivat/ [208a]
prabhāsvaram idaṃ cittaṃ prakṛtyāgantavo malāḥ// [208b]
tatprāg apy asamarthānāṃ paścāc chaktiḥ kva tanmaye/ [209a]
nâlaṃ prarodhum atyantaṃ syandinyām agnivad bhuvi// [209b]
bādhakôtpattisāmarthyagarbhe śakto 'pi vastuni/ [210a]
nirupadravabhūtârthasvabhāvasya viparyayaiḥ// [210b]
na bādhā yatnavattve 'pi buddhes tat pakṣapātataḥ/ [211a]

Tibetan[12]

bshad zin lam de goms pa las/ gnas gyur gal te gnas gyur kyang// [205cd]
lam bzhin skyon ni 'byung zhe na/ ma yin nus pa med phyir ro/ [206ab]
rnam shes yul 'dzin pa yi chos/ ji ltar yod de 'dzin pa dang// [206cd]
yod pa yi ni bdag nyid de/ 'di yis skyed par byed pa'ang yin/ [207ab]
rang bzhin 'di yin 'di las de/ rkyen gzhan gyis ni gol 'gyur bzhin// [207cd]
ldog pa la ni rkyan la ltos/ mi brtan sbrul gyi blo bzhin no// [208ab]
sems 'di rang bzhin 'od gsal te/ dri ma rnams ni glo bur na// [208cd]
de phyir sngar yang nus med rnams/ de bdag gyur la phyis nus med/ [209ab]
nus yod na yang gnod pa can/ skyed nus snying po can dngos la// [209cd]
yun du gnas nus yod min te/ sa rlon la ni me bzhin no/ [210ab]
'tshe ba med dang yang dag don/ rang bzhin la ni phyin log gis/ [210cd]
'bad du zin kyang mi zlogs te/ blo ni de phyogs 'dzin phyir ro/ [211ab]

11 See, e.g., Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavārttika," 30; Ruegg, *La théorie*, 435; Dwarikādās Śāstrī, *Pramāṇavārttika of Acharya Dharmakīrti, with the Commentary 'Vritti' of Acharya Manorathanandin* (Varanasi, 1968), 61-64.

12 See, e.g., Miyasaka, "Pramāṇavārttika," 31.

English[13]

[Skt 205b; Tib 205cd] That path has been mentioned; through [one's] becoming accustomed to it, the base is transformed.
[Skt 206a; Tib 205d-206b] If you say: Even in the case of a basic transformation,[14] faults may arise just as the path did, [the reply is:] Not so, because there is no power [whereby faults could arise in a mind that has undergone a basic transformation.]
[Skt 206b-207b; Tib 206c-207c] The characteristic of consciousness is apprehension of an object.[15] [The object] is apprehended just as it exists; it is a generator of [a consciousness apprehending it] as it really exists. This is the nature [of consciousness and object[16]].
[Skt 207b-208a; Tib 207c-208b] Straying from this [nature] occurs through extrinsic conditions;[17] when [the error] is reversed, it is [also] in dependence on conditions. [Error] is baseless, like the notion of a snake [superimposed on a rope].
[Skt 208b; Tib 208cd] The mind is naturally luminous; its stains are adventitious.
[Skt 209a; Tib 209b] Therefore, [the stains] that are powerless earlier [on the path] are also powerless later, in one [for whom] that [wisdom] has become natural.[18]

13 See, e.g., Nagatomi Masatoshi, "A Study of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*: An English Translation and Annotation of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, Book I," (Ph.D thesis, Harvard University, 1957), 201-207; Ruegg, *La théorie*, 435-436; Tilmann Vetter, *Der Buddha und seine Lehre in Dharmakīrtis Pramāṇavārttika [Pramāṇasiddhi chapter, verses 146c-287]* (Vienna, 1984), 105-110; Roger R. Jackson, *Why Buddhism is True: Dharmakīrti and rGyal tshab rje on Knowledge, Rebirth, No-Self and Enlightenment: The "Establishment Of Authority" Chapter of the Pramāṇavārttika* (London, 1990—forthcoming), 483-489 [ms. pages].

14 The Tibetan here repeats *gnas gyur* (*āśrayaḥ parivartate*), while the Sanskrit reads *sātmye*, "in the same nature" (or: manner).

15 The Tibetan *rnam shes yul 'dzin pa yi chos* is ambiguous. The syntax suggests that it might be translated, "Consciousness has the characteristic of apprehending objects," but I here opt for a version somewhat closer to the Sanskrit, where *dharmo* ("characteristic") is clearly the subject.

16 The Tibetan lacks an equivalent for Sanskrit *asyās*, which is a pronoun referring to consciousness and its object.

17 The first occurrence of the Tibetan *rkyen* translates the Sanskrit *nimitta*, the second translates *pratyaya*. The two seem to be used synonymously here.

18 Tibetan *de bdag gyur la* translates Sanskrit *tanmaye*, which seems to mean, literally, "in one who consists of that [wisdom]." The Tibetan of the second part of the verse fails to reflect the rhetorical question of the Sanskrit: "What power could there be later in one who consists of that [wisdom]?" (*paścāc chaktiḥ kva tanmaye*).

> [Skt 209b-210a; Tib 209c-210b] Even if [stains] do have power, in an entity with the potential ability to generate that which damages [the stains] they have no power to abide long, as fire [will not burn long] on damp ground.
> [Skt 210b-211a; Tib 210c-211b] That which has the nature of being free from harm and objectively correct[19] cannot be reversed by its opposite, even with effort, because thought holds to the side [that is natural].

The Context

The text just translated appears in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* ("Establishment of Authority") chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika.* This chapter is the most explicitly "religious" of Dharmakīrti's writings, but it is perhaps more accurately described as religious philosophy, for it begins with a purely epistemological discussion of the definition of *pramāṇa* (as a new and nondeceptive cognition), then goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the Buddha is "one who has become an authority" (*pramāṇabhūta*) for those who seek spiritual liberation. In his proof that the Buddha is authoritative, Dharmakīrti seeks to show that he merits the further epithets "one who desires to benefit the world" (*jagadhitaiṣin*), "teacher" (*śāstṛ*), "well-gone" (*sugata*), and "savior" (*tāyin*). This, in turn, requires a demonstration that (a) compassion and other mental qualities can be developed infinitely and (b) the salvific truths that the Buddha teaches are in fact true. The former entails a demonstration of the reality of past and future lives and the nature of mental qualities that evolves into an extended discussion of the mind-body problem. The latter entails an attempt to prove, sequentially, that each of the four noble truths corresponds to "actuality" (*yathābhūta*) because it is "objectively impelled" or "effected by the force of actual entities" (*vastubalapravṛtta*). It is in the course of this latter proof that Dharmakīrti's discussion of the natural luminosity of mind occurs.

The verses immediately preceding the ones we are analyzing seek to prove that the Vātsīputrīya belief in a "person" (*pudgala*) that is neither permanent nor impermanent is inadmissible, and that such an entity could not—any more than the Hindu *ātman*—be capable of either bondage or liberation. This, in turn, is part of a discussion of the nature of the liberated mind, hence of the truth of cessation (*nirodhasatya*). Since the verses we are analyzing begin by discussing the nature of a mind that has undergone a "basic transformation" (*āśrayaparivṛtti*)—and such a

19 If the compound is read as a *dvandva* rather than as a *bahuvrīhi*, then it would be translated as "That which is free from harm, objectively correct and natural." Nagatomi, "A Study," 207, takes it this way.

mind may be either liberated or still on the *ārya* path[20]—it is not surprising that Ruegg identifies the topic as the truth of cessation.[21] Dharmakīrti, of course, made no chapter-headings in his text, but the entire *Pramāṇavārttika* commentarial tradition—starting with Dharmakīrti's disciple Devendrabuddhi (seventh century), extending through other Indian commentators like Prajñākaragupta (eighth century) and Manorathanandin (tenth century?), and culminating in Tibetan scholiasts like rGyal tshab rje, mKhas grub rje, dGe 'dun 'grub (all fifteenth century) and Mi pham rgya mtsho (nineteenth century)—regards the second half of verse 205 as the beginning of the section on the truth of path (*mārgasatya*). The detailed section-headings (*sa bcad*) in the Tibetan commentaries imply that with verse 205b Dharmakīrti clearly begins his discussion of the way in which the realization of no-self is the essential component of the only true path, that of Buddhism. There is, however, no explicit mention of this realization in the verses we are analyzing, and it would seem that the real reason why the commentators have identified verse 205b as the beginning of the discussion of the truth of path is quite simply that it refers to the path, as that which has already been mentioned (*ukto mārgas, lam bshad zin*). However, a mere reference to the path—especially in the context of a discussion of the nature of one in whom "the base is transformed" (*āśraya parivartate*)—need not entail that the *truth* of path is being addressed. The point is moot, really, and whether we follow Ruegg or the commentarial tradition, we find that the contents of the section under analysis make important points about both the path *and* the liberated state that it leads to—but that some of the most interesting lessons to be drawn from it are not soteriological at all, but epistemological.

In the remainder of this article we will examine Dharmakīrti's text divided into the semantic units exposed in the English translation given above. We will show how the units are linked, and cite a variety of commentarial perspectives in order to explain some of the ways in which each one can be interpreted.

> [Tib 205c] That path has been mentioned; through [one's] becoming accustomed to it, the base is transformed.

Devendrabuddhi says that the path already "has been mentioned" at *Pramāṇavārttika* II.132-139b, in the section where the Buddha's quality of being a teacher (*śāstṛ*) is discussed.[22] At II.138c, his teacherhood is equated with "becoming accustomed to method" (*upāyâbhyāsa, thabs goms pa*), and it is clear that "method" here means not that side of the Mahāyāna path that is often contrasted with "wisdom" (*prajñā*), but, rather, *includes* wisdom. Indeed, "seeing no-self" (*nairātmyadarśanam, bdag med mthong ba*) is said at II.136b to be the opposite of the cause of suffering,

20 On this issue see the discussion of the verses beginning "Even if [stains] do have power" [Tibetan 209c-210b] below, and especially the notes thereto.

21 Ruegg, *La théorie*, 435.

22 We refer to Devendrabuddhi's *Pañjikā* on the *Pramāṇavārttika* (Peking Tanjur 5717b, vols. 130-131; Tōhoku 4217, Derge Tanjur Tshad-ma, vol. *che*) by page and line of the Delhi "Karmapa" edition (no date). The comment mentioned is found at 173,1.4.

hence itself the most important single method for achieving liberation—so important a method that Devendrabuddhi[23] and all subsequent commentators simply equate it with the path. "Becoming accustomed" (*abhyāsa, goms pa*) is a crucial term in Dharmakīrti's soteriological epistemology. It might equally well be translated "habituating" or "familiarizing," and refers to the mind's capacity to "make its own" or "make natural" any object that it chooses.[24] Through the process of becoming accustomed to the object that is the opposite to the cause of suffering, i.e., by that realization of no-self that *is* the path, "the base is transformed."

The mention of a transformation at the base (*āśrayaparivṛtti, gnas gyur*) is taken by all of Dharmakīrti's commentators to refer to the attainment of a state where, as Devendrabuddhi puts it, "one's mind has taken on the nature of the path";[25] hence, one's "natural" perspective has become the understanding of no-self, and faults no longer can arise. There is disagreement, however, as to whether the basic transformation occurs simply in "the mind" (*citta*) or in the "store consciousness" (*ālayavijñāna*). Prajñākaragupta[26] and Manorathanandin[27] both specify that the "basis" (*āśraya, gnas*) that is transformed is, in fact, the store consciousness, but neither Devendrabuddhi nor any of the Tibetans mentions it. It is worth recalling in this regard that, for Tibetan tenet-systematizers, Dharmakīrti was a Cittamātrin "following reasoning" who, unlike such Cittamātrins "following scripture" as Asaṅga, did not accept the existence of a store consciousness. The term *āśrayaparivṛtti* is, of course, often associated with Yogâcāra, and there are important sources (e.g., the *Laṅkâvatārasūtra*) that identify the *āśraya* as the store consciousness, but the two are not, in fact, inextricably linked. Indeed, the "basic transformation" is mentioned several times in the *Abhidharmakośa*,[28] where the "basis" appears to be the mind-stream (*cittasaṃtāna*) that possesses the path that is the antidote to mental faults.[29] Given Dharmakīrti's failure to mention the store consciousness anywhere, and given his strong reliance throughout *Pramāṇavārttika* II on *abhidharma* categories and definitions, as well as his close adherence to the *abhidharma* description in this particular case, it is probable that he did not have the store consciousness in mind when describing the "basic transformation," and that the Tibetan view is the correct one.

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23 *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 173:4-5.

24 Indeed, in a word-play particular to their language, Tibetans will often define meditation (*sgom pa*) as the process of becoming accustomed (*goms pa*) to an object.

25 *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 173:5: *lam de'i bdag nyid la sems gnas par 'gyur ro* (= folio 87a).

26 We refer to Prajñākaragupta's *Alaṅkāra* (or, *Bhāṣya*) on the *Pramāṇavārttika* (Peking Tanjur 5917, vol. 132; Tōhoku 4221, Derge Tanjur Tshad-ma, vol. *te*) by page and line of the Delhi "Karmapa" edition (no date). The comment that specifies the *ālayavijñāna* is at 265:7.

27 We refer to Manorathanandin's *Vṛtti* on the *Pramāṇavārttika* by page of Śāstrī's edition of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. See Śāstrī, *Pramāṇavārttika*, 71, for the comment that specifies the *ālayavijñāna*.

28 For references see La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakoça*, VI.32.

29 See Ruegg, *La théorie*, 481.

Whatever their disagreements over the nature of the "basis" that is transformed, Dharmakīrti's commentators are in accord that the transformation itself involves abandoning the belief that a self exists. As Devendrabuddhi puts it, "when one has perfected meditation on that path that has the characteristic of seeing no-self, then the basis is thoroughly transformed."[30] Prajñākaragupta adds that "when the no-self that is inharmonious with apprehending I and mine has become one's self[-nature], then one will be free from all faults."[31] mKhas grub rje explains that "through one's becoming accustomed to that direct antidote to self-grasping, every fault is abandoned, and one attains a complete basic transformation."[32] According to Mi pham, "since self-grasping, etc., find no basis in the mind, one attains a basic transformation such that even subtle faults come to have the nature of non-existence."[33]

> [Tib 205d-206b] If you say: Even in the case of a basic transformation, faults may arise just as the path did, [the reply is:] Not so, because there is no power [whereby faults could arise in a mind that has undergone a basic transformation.]

Having argued that the path may arise in a mind previously pervaded by faults, Dharmakīrti now must face an objection: if the path may arise in the midst of faults, then why, by the same token, may faults not arise in the midst of the path?[34] The opponent here is not identified by Dharmakīrti or any of his commentators, though it clearly is someone skeptical about the possibility of spiritual liberation. The likeliest candidates are the Lokāyatas and Mīmāṃsakas, each of whom has opposed Dharmakīrti earlier in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, the former over the existence of past and future lives, the latter over the Buddha's knowledge of what to abandon and what to practice on a spiritual path. In any case, the logical force of the objection derives from the assumption of a symmetrical relation between positive and negative, or virtuous and faulty states of consciousness, such that each has an equal power to supplant the other.

Dharmakīrti's response to the objection is simply to insist that faults do not have the power to arise in a transformed mind in the way that a transformation can occur in the midst of faults. As mKhas grub rje notes, "in a mindstream that has

30 ... *bdag med pa mthong ba'i mtshan nyid can gyi lam de'i sgom pa rdzogs pa na/ rten ni yongs su gyur par 'gyur/ Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, , 173:4-5.

31 *bdag dang bdag gir 'dzin pa dang mi mthun pa bdag med pa de'i bdag tu gyur pa na nyes pa mtha' dang bral bar 'gyur ro/ Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 265:7 (= folio 133a).

32 *bdag 'dzin gyi dngos gnyen du khyod goms pa las nyes pa ma lus pa spangs te gnas 'gyur mthar phyin pa thob par 'gyur ... rGyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, Gurudeva, *mKhas grub rje gSung 'bum*, vol. da, 179:4.

33 Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 355:6.

34 rGyal tshab rje specifies that the opponent is trying to deny that the truths of cessation and path possess, respectively, the aspects of definitve emergence and definitive removal. See rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen, *rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed: Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa'i rnam bshad phyin ci ma log par gsal bar byed pa*, 334.

taken on the nature of realizing no-self," faults do not have the power to return.[35] Mi pham explains that "although there exists on the path the power to damage [the faults of] a faulty mind, there does not exist in a faulty mind the power to damage the path, for it will be impossible for faults to arise in a continuum that has completed the path and undergone a basic transformation."[36] Taking the discussion a little further, Prajñākaragupta explains that faults cannot replace virtues in the same way that virtues replace faults, "because the faults are destroyed by the virtues ... for the virtues are [in accord with] the nature of entities, whereas the faults are the opposite of that."[37] dGe 'dun grub goes even further, explaining that "the reason for that is that the mind is luminous by nature and its stains adventitious."[38] Prajñākaragupta and dGe 'dun grub are hinting here at the reason why virtues can replace faults, but not vice versa: it is a question of correspondence to the nature of entities and, ultimately, of the nature of the mind itself.

The major point to note here is that Dharmakīrti and his commentators are arguing that the relationship between the path and the faults, or virtues and vices, is *not* symmetrical, that the negative cannot replace the positive in the same way that the positive can replace the negative. The reason for this, alluded to here by Prajñākaragupta and dGe 'dun grub (and soon to be raised by Dharmakīrti himself), is that awareness is the nature of mind, and an awareness that is "in accord with the nature of entities" has by definition a greater power than an awareness that is merely subjective, without a corresponding extrinsic reality. Since, according to Buddhists, no-self is the nature of entities, a mind that has made the realization of no-self "natural" to it has a greater purchase on reality than a mind that has not, and so cannot be replaced by the latter.

> [Tib 206c-207c] The characteristic of consciousness is apprehension of an object. [The object] is apprehended just as it exists; it is a generator of [a consciousness apprehending it] as it really exists. This is the nature [of consciousness and object].

Dharmakīrti realizes that it is not sufficient simply to assert—as he has in the previous section—that a mind transformed at the base precludes the arising of faults: he must explain *why* faults have no power to affect such a mind, i.e., *why* there exists an asymmetry between virtuous and faulty states of mind. The explanation

35 *nyes pa rnams kyis bdag med rtogs pa'i ngang du gyur pa'i sems rgyud la slar de med par byed mi nus pa ... rGyas pa'i bstan bcos*, Gurudeva, *mKhas grub rje gSung 'bum*, vol. da, 180:3.

36 *... nyes bcas kyi sems la gnod pa'i nus pa lam la yod kyang lam la gnod pa'i nus pa nyes bcas kyi sems la med pa'i phyir na lam mthar phyin pa gnas gyur pa'i rgyud la nyes pa 'byung mi srid par 'gyur ro/ Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 356:2-3

37 *nyes pa rnams yon tan yod pas bcom pa'i phyir ro/ ... yon tan rnams ni dngos po'i rang bzhin yin pa'i phyir dang/ nyes pa rnams ni de las bzlog pa yin pa'i phyir ro/ Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 266:1-2

38 *de'i rgyu mtshan sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba dang dri ma rnams glo bur ba yin pa'i phyir ro/* dGe 'dun grub pa, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel rnam par bshad pa*, 140:3.

that he gives—anticipated above by Prajñākaragupta and dGe 'dun grub—is that the nature or characteristic (*dharma, chos*) of consciousness (i.e., of any of the six *vijñānas*) is an apprehension of an object *just as it exists* (*yathāsti, ji ltar yod*), and that an object's nature is to effect a consciousness that apprehends it just as it exists. "Consciousness" is frequently defined in *abhidharma* treatises in terms of the apprehension, "announcement" (*vijñapti, prativijñapti*) or bare awareness of an object,[39] but the specification that the apprehension is of an object *just as it exists* seems to be Dharmakīrti's contribution. It is this specification that provides him with his central argument for the irreversibility of a transformed mind. Indeed, with this section we have arrived at the heart of Dharmakīrti's discussion. Important as it is, however, it is laconic in the extreme, and for explication of some of its more problematic assumptions we must turn once again to the commentarial tradition.

It is Devendrabuddhi who provides the most interesting discussion here. He begins by remarking that "the nature of mind has the self-nature of seeing reality; it does not have the self-nature of faults that are associated with perspectives that are the inverse [of reality].[40] Any defilements of this [mind] exist by virtue of adventitious conditions .... A mind that abides in its own nature does not provide a basis for faults, because it is a nature that is objectively impelled."[41] Devendrabuddhi goes on to define "self-nature" (*bdag nyid*) as that which—even when an entity's aspects are altered by the force of conditions—is separable from those conditions, hence not itself altered by changing circumstances. For example, the purity of gold is unaffected when it is combined with other metals, since that purity can be restored simply by separating the gold from that with which it has been combined; similarly, the mind naturally sees a rope as a rope, and only will see it as a snake by virtue of extrinsic conditions.[42] Alluding to the opposites of the "inverted" perspectives that stand in the way of liberation, Prajñākaragupta adds the

39 For some discussion see K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (London, 1963); La Vallée Poussin, *Abhidharmakoça*, I.30 (on *Abhidharmakośakārikā* I:16a); Walpola Rahula, *Le compendium de la super-doctrine (philosophie) (Abhidharmasamuccaya) d'Asaṅga* (Paris, 1973), 17 (on *Abhidharmasamuccaya* i.i.23).

40 These "inverted" (*viparyāsa, phyin ci log pa*) perspectives usually are said to be the mistaken belief that the painful is pleasurable, the impermanent permanent, the non-self self, and the impure pure.

41 *sems gyi rang bzhin ni de kho na nyid mthong ba'i bdag nyid can yin gyi/ phyin ci log gi rnam pa dang rjes su 'brel pa'i nyes pa de'i bdag nyid can ni ma yin no/ 'di'i nye ba'i nyon mongs pa gang yin pa de yang glo bur pa'i rkyen gyi dbang gis yin no/ ... rang gi rang bzhin la gnas pa'i sems ni yang nyes pa'i rten byed pa ma yin te/ dngos po'i stobs gyis zhugs pa'i rang bzhin nyid yin pa'i phyir ro/ Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 173:7 - 174:2.

42 *... gang zhig rang bzhin gyis de'i bdag nyid du gyur pa gang yin pa rkyen gyis dbang gis rnam pa gzhan du 'jug pa de ni rkyen dang shin tu bral par yod na rang gi de'i bdag nyid thob pa yang bdag nyid de'i rten du gyur ba ma yin te/ dper na gser rang bzhin gyis rnam par dag pa 'dres pa'i rkyen gi dbang gyis 'dres par gyur pa rnam par sbyangs bas de bzhin du med pa na rang gi bdag nyid la gnas pa yang bdag nyid ma dag par grol ba ma yin pa lta bu'am/ 'di lta ste sems de nyid rang bzhin gyis thag pa la thag pa'i rnam par mthong ba'i bdag nyid can gyen gi dbang gis sbrul du snang ba/ de'i rkyen shin tu med pa na yang sbral du 'dzin pa ma yin pa lta bu'o/ Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 174:2-4.

soteriological corollary to this epistemological stance: "Thus, apprehending objects as they are—as having the nature of impermanence, no self, etc.—is the nature of consciousness; anything else is explained as not being its nature."[43] Mi pham makes essentially the same point in terms typical of the Tibetan scholastic tradition: "Consciousness has a natural mode of being cognitive and clear: it has the characteristic or nature of effecting apprehension of an object. It apprehends the object according to how it actually exists .... The nature or mode of abiding of the object-possessor is like that. Since it is [effected] by the force of actual entities, who could reverse it? No one."[44]

The tremendously important point made here by Dharmakīrti and his commentators is that the justification for Buddhist soteriology is to be found in basic epistemology. It is the mind's very nature to apprehend objects as they really exist, whereas its apprehension of objects in ways that they do *not* exist is adventitious. This correct apprehension is what in the West would be called the *essential* property of mind, while its adventitious misapprehensions are *accidental* properties. The latter, having no purchase on reality because they have not been effected by entities as they actually are, have no more power than a dream that is sublated by waking consciousness. Thus, the asymmetrical relationship between correct and faulty states of mind is derived from the fact that the one corresponds to actual states-of-affairs in the world, while the other does not. In soteriological terms, the actual state-of-affairs of entities is that they are impermanent, no-self, suffering, and impure; by definition, then, a consciousness that apprehends entities thusly has greater power than a consciousness that apprehends them as being permanent, a self, pleasure or purity. Two crucial assumptions seem to underlie all this. We will explore their implications in the next part of the paper, but for now, simply let them be noted: (1) it is the mind's nature to apprehend objects *correctly*; and (2) a correct apprehension has greater *power* than an incorrect one because it is *effected* by the reality to which it corresponds.

> [Tib 207c-208b] Straying from this [nature] occurs through extrinsic conditions;[45] when [the error] is reversed, it is [also] in dependence on conditions. [Error] is baseless, like the notion of a snake [superimposed on a rope].

43 *des ni yul ni mi rtag pa nyid dang bdag med pa la sogs pa'i rang bzhin la de lta bu'i 'dzin pa nyid ni rnam par shes pa'i rang bzhin yin gyi gzhan ni de'i rang bzhin ma yin no zhes bshad pa/ Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 266:5

44 *rnam par shes pa ni rig cing gsal ba'i ngang tshul can yin la de ni yul 'dzin par byed pa yi chos sam rang bzhin can yin no/ de yang yul ji ltar yod pa de de bzhin du na 'dzin pa ... / ... yul can gyi rang bzhin nam gnas tshul 'di lta bu yin pa ni dngos po'i stobs las yin pas sus kyang bzlog pa med do/ Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 356:4-6.

45 The first occurrence of the Tibetan *rkyen* translates the Sanskrit *nimitta*, the second translates *pratyaya*. The two seem to be used synonymously here.

In the previous section, Dharmakīrti has asserted that what is intrinsic, or natural, to the mind is the apprehension of objects as they actually exist. As rGyal tshab rje recognizes, however, this assertion can easily evoke an objection: "It is taught that stains are adventitious; the actuality of objects is impermanence, no-self, etc. If that is seen from the beginning by an unmistaken mind, then one will be freed without effort."[46] In other words, Dharmakīrti's previous assertion raises the epistemological problem that error is left unexplained and the soteriological problem that liberation should already have occurred, or should occur effortlessly. To this unstated objection, then, Dharmakīrti directs his explanation of error: it occurs through extrinsic conditions (*nimittāntarataḥ*, *rkyen gzhan gyis*); it is baseless, but nevertheless must be reversed via other, corrective conditions. Just how it is we err and correct ourselves is explained in more detail by Dharmakīrti's commentators. Devendrabuddhi discusses error in some detail,[47] but his analysis is in many ways a reiteration of the points he has already made about the nature of mind and the nature of "nature." Ultimately (*don dam par*)[48] the nature of mind is the apprehension of objects. A cognition (*shes pa*) that cognizes what is not the case is not knowledge (*rtogs pa*) but merely superimposition (*sgro 'dogs*). Superimposition, being a deceptive addition to what is actually "there," is superfluous and adventitious, and what is superfluous and adventitious cannot be the "nature" of something. Being baseless, a mistaken cognition is corrected by recourse to authoritative cognition (*tshad ma*), and authoritative cognition is not liable to replacement, as, e.g., the understanding in a particular instance that a rope is a rope and not a snake cannot be replaced by a renewed belief that it is a snake. It is Prajñākaragupta who provides the most interesting discussion here, for he makes a serious attempt to describe the process whereby we come to have erroneous cognitions. He takes as his example our mistaken cognition of the permanence of things. "Even as one is perceiving [an object's] impermanence," he explains, "one intends [the object with] a desiring mind, so one is deceived by the imputation that that exists as permanent, or one is deceived by the arising of another object that is similar; this is not [correct] understanding, because later one will ascertain through perception that momentariness is the case."[49] Prajñākaragupta explains further[50] that entities arise momentarily from their own homogenes (*rigs mthun pa snga ma las*). Because they arise

46 *dri ma glo bur bar bstan pa ni yul gyi gnas lugs mi rtag pa dang bdag med sogs yin la/ de sngar nas blo ma 'khrul bas mthong na 'bad pa med par grol bar 'gyur ro zhe na/ rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed*, 334.

47 *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 174:7 - 175:5.

48 Devendrabuddhi is probably using "ultimately" in the sense of "in the final analysis." He is *not* necessarily making an ontological claim about the "ultimate nature" of mind—which is, after all, from a Sautrāntika point of view its momentariness and efficiency. Similarly, according to the Mādhyamika stance adopted by many Tibetan interpreters of Dharmakīrti, the mind's ultimate nature is emptiness, while its capacity to cognize objects as they are is, more properly, its conventional nature.

49 *mi rtag pa nyid de ni mthong bzhin du'ang/ blo zhen yod pa dmigs pas rtag tu de ltar yod par dogs pas bslus ba'am/ 'dra ba gzhan 'byung bas bslus pas mi rtogs te/ skad cig ma tha ma mthong ba rnams la nges pa'i phyir ro/ Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 267:1-2

50 *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 267:3 - 268:4.

from homogenes, they look very much like the entities from which they have arisen, but because they have arisen from homogenes, they are, in fact, separate entities in a series without substratum. Because of the similarity of one entity to the one that preceded it, a misapprehension of continuity is possible, especially when the mind is clouded by desire (*zhen pa*), for a desirous mind wishes to enjoy objects, and therefore has an emotional stake in their persistence. Having such a stake, the mind capitalizes on the potential for the imputation of permanence, and believes that imputation to correspond to reality. However, this imputation cannot stand up to authoritative perception or inference; it is sublated by them, as the perception of a rope as a snake is sublated by the correct apprehension that it is a rope. With respect to this sublation of mistaken cognitions by authoritative cognition, Mi pham explains: "When one has strayed thus [into the belief in permanence, self, purity, or pleasure] the reversal of that deception or superimposition occurs through dependence on reverse-effecting conditions, such as that becoming accustomed to the path which is induced by authoritative cognitions harmful [to delusion]; one does not reverse delusion independently .... [The apprehension of a rope as a snake] is not irreversible, because, being effected by force of what is not an [actual] entity, it is subject to destruction by authoritative cognition, it is adventitious and—being separable from the mind—it is baseless.][51]

Thus Dharmakīrti and his commentators have discussed the nature of both the mind and our mental errors: the former is an essential, reality-based, objectively impelled correct apprehension of objects; the latter is an accidental, defilement-rooted, subjectively impelled, baseless misapprehension. The latter, having no correspondence to reality, can be sublated by the former; the former, on the other hand, because it does correspond to reality, cannot be replaced by the latter. This is the case for "conventional" cognitions like that of a rope as a rope, and also of "ultimate" cognitions like that of entities as impermanent. Having argued for the asymmetry of correct and mistaken cognitions, Dharmakīrti is now ready to summarize his position, and to do so, he will cite one of the most famous of all Buddhist metaphors for the mind: natural luminosity.

> [Tib 208cd] The mind is naturally luminous; its stains are adventitious.

To a degree, Dharmakīrti's reiteration of this hallowed Buddhist formula is anticlimactic. The two previous sections have established the central argument of the verses we are considering: that the essential characteristic of mind is the apprehension of objects as they are and that any straying from that is through baseless, accidental conditions. To assert mind's natural luminosity and the adventitiousness of stains, therefore, is in a certain sense redundant. At the same time, the juxtaposition of the formula with the material that has preceded it *does* add a particular imag-

51 *de ltar gol ba na 'khrul ba'am sgro 'dogs pa de ldog pa yang ni gnod pa can gyi tshad mas drang pa'i lam goms pa sogs ldog byed kyi rkyen/ Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 357:1-3.

istic forcefulness to the argument (since mind's correct apprehension of objects may be seen as its "illumination" of them), and, conversely, the fact that the preceding argument has entailed discussion not only of "ultimate" soteriology but of conventional epistemology, allows us to view the traditional formula from a new and interesting perspective. The exact source for Dharmakīrti's version of the formula is unclear. He seems not to be quoting it verbatim from any particular text, but, rather, organizing familiar elements into a metrically appropriate form. *Pramāṇavārttika* II.208b (Tib 208cd) reads: *prabhāsvaram idaṃ cittaṃ prakṛtyāgantavo malāḥ*. The pre-Dharmakīrti version of the formula that most closely matches this in terms of *elements* appears to be *Ratnagotravibhāga* i,63: *CITTASYA yāsau PRAKṚTIḤ PRABHĀSVARĀ na jātu sā dyaur iva yāti vikriyām/ ĀGANTUKAI rāgaMALĀdibhis tv asāv upaiti saṃkleśam abhūtakalpajaiḥ*.[52] The pre-Dharmakīrti version that seems the closest match *syntactically* is the "original" *Aṅguttara Nikāya* passage: *PABHASSARAM IDAṂ bhikkhave CITTAṂ/ taṃ ca kho ĀGANTUKEHI UPPAKILESEHI upakiliṭṭhaṃ*.[53]

Among Indian commentators, Devendrabuddhi glosses Dharmakīrti's discussion succinctly by explaining: "This mind is naturally luminous [because] its nature is the apprehension of actual [entities] just as they are. The stains are the self-view, attachment, etc. Because they come about through extrinsic conditions, they are adventitious; they are not [the mind's] nature .... They occur by virtue of [previous] substantial causes of their own type."[54] Similarly, Prajñākaragupta asserts: "This mind is naturally luminous because its apprehension is free from [ideas of] permanence. The stains are adventitious because incorrect superimpositions, on account of their rootlessness, are just completely foolish. Ultimately, no permanence appears; because [entities] are empty when analyzed, the stains [including belief in permanence] are adventitious."[55] Manorathanandin contributes an image to the discussion of stains, noting that they are not any more natural to the mind than clouds and mist are to the sky.[56]

Among Tibetan commentators, dGe 'dun grub explains: "This mind is naturally luminous, because it is a mind that understands the mode of existence of its object. The stains are adventitious because they arise from a cause that is delu-

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52 See Ruegg, *La théorie*, 420; Ernst Obermiller, "The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation, Being a Manual of Buddhist Monism, the Work of Ārya Maitreya with a Commentary by Āryāsaṅga," *Acta Orientalia* IX (1931), 188.

53 See Ruegg, *La théorie*, 411.

54 ... *sems 'di rang bzhin 'od gsal te/ yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin du 'dzin pa'i rang bzhin yin no/ dri rnams ni bdag tu lta ba dang chags pa la sogs pa'o/ rkyen gzhan gyi rgyu mtshan las 'ong pa nyid yin pa'i phyir/ glo bur ba yin gyi rang bzhin ma yin no/ ... de dag ni rang dang ris mthun pa'i nye bar len pa'i rgyu stobs kyis 'jug pa yin ... Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 177:5-6.

55 *sems 'di rang bzhin 'od gsal te/ rtag pa nyid dang bral ba nyid des 'dzin pa'i phyir/ dri ma rnams ni glo bur ba/ yang dag pa ma yin pa sgro 'dogs pa ni/ rtsa ba med pa can nyid kyis glen pa tsam du zad pa yin pa'i phyir ro/ don dam par ni rtag pa nyid 'gar yang snag ba med de/ des na rnam par dpyad pas stong ba'i phyir dri ma rnams glo bur ba yin no/ Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 268:5-6.

56 Śāstrī, *Pramāṇavārttika*, 73.

sion."[57] rGyal tshab rje argues similarly, and then adds two intriguing observations: (1) one of the reasons for the mind's natural luminosity is that its nature is "perishable" (*'jig pa*); thus, even though it may be obscured by stains at present, its perishable nature assures that this condition need not obtain forever; were it permanent, defilement might be eternal and enlightenment impossible.[58] (2) The fact that the mind's nature is luminous "does not mean that the nature of mind is not covered by stains; it does mean that the darkness of self-grasping that has come over the mind does not partake of (lit., "enter," *zhugs pa*) the nature of mind. If it did so partake, then the manner of apprehending that apprehends a self would be in accord with how the mind actually exists. If that were the case, there would be no-self, and a self would exist."[59] In his commentary, mKhas grub rje glosses the key terms in the traditional formula, explaining that "the meaning of 'luminous' and 'adventitious' is, respectively, unsuitable and suitable for separation from the mindstream by the power of the antidote."[60] In other words, what is "natural" (the wisdom realizing no-self)—being established (*grub pa*) in reality—cannot be eliminated, whereas what is adventitious (self-grasping)—not being thus established—*can* be eliminated. Finally, Mi pham, in the course of arguing for the separability of stains from a mind in which wisdom has been naturalized,[61] makes a subtle but crucial distinction: mind, he says, has naturally *arisen* as deluded (*ngo bo nyid kyis 'khrul pa can skyes nas*), but the stains of delusion are not naturally *established*, or existent (*dri ma rnams ni ngo bo nyid kyis grub pa min*). In other words, delusion arises from the mind as naturally as a face appears in a mirror; but we know from the example of the mirror (or dreams, or mirages) that what appears may not actually exist. Hence, for something to be an essential property of an entity, it must do more than *appear* in conjunction with it; it must actually be established in it. If mind is the proper apprehension of objects, then any incorrect apprehension, e.g., of permanence or a self, cannot be established in it, hence it is adventitious, or accidental to it.

As we have seen, Dharmakīrti's commentators add some interesting twists and the occasional fine distinction to the discussion of the nature of the mind and its stains, but they do not really advance the philosophical discussion beyond the point

57 *sems gyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba yin te/ yul gyi gnas tshul rtogs pa'i blo yin pa'i phyir/ dri ma rnams ni chos can/ glo bur ba yin te/ 'khrul rgyu las skyes pa'i phyir/ Tshad ma rnam 'grel rnam par bshad pa*, 141:1.

58 To the degree that perishability entails emptiness, rGyal tshab rje's suggestion provides a possible bridge to discussions of *tathāgatagarbha*, since dGe lugs pas like rGyal tshab rje often define *tathāgatagarbha* as the mind's emptiness of inherent existence, hence its capacity for change.

59 ... *sems kyi rang bzhin dri mas bsgribs pa'i don ma yin gyi/ sems la bdag 'dzin gyi mun pa babs pa de'i rang bzhin la ma zhugs pa'i don te/ zhugs na bdag 'dzin gyi 'dzin stangs sems gyi gnas lugs la ji ltar yod pa de dang mthun par 'gyur la/ de lta na bdag med med cing bdag yod par 'gyur ro/ rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed*, 335.

60 ... *sems gyi rang bzhin dang glo bur ba zhes pa ni sems rgyud la gnyen po'i stobs kyis 'bral du mi rung ba dang rung ba'i don yin ... rGyas pa'i bstan bcos*, Gurudeva, *mKhas grub rje gSung 'bum*, vol. da, 181:4-5.

61 *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 357:4-5.

reached in the two previous sections. Indeed, rGyal tshab rje appropriately entitles the text-division that includes 208cd the "summary" of the preceding argument. Nevertheless, as noted above, it does provide a striking image as a summary to that argument—an image made all the more powerful by its antiquity and resonance in the Buddhist tradition. By citing the mind's luminosity and the adventitiousness of defilements, Dharmakīrti is *not* explicitly appealing to scriptural authority; nevertheless, he *is* self-consciously invoking a hallowed phrase, and in so doing he both adds force to his argument and, as also noted above, provides a new perspective on the phrase itself, raising the possibility of its applicability to conventional epistemological analysis.

> [Tib 209ab] Therefore, [the stains] that are powerless earlier [on the path] are also powerless later, in one [for whom] that [wisdom] has become natural.

Having completed his basic epistemological discussion (in verses 206c-208), Dharmakīrti now moves back to an exclusively soteriological level. Having demonstrated the correct apprehension of objects as the mind's "luminous" nature, and the consequent asymmetry between correct and erroneous apprehensions, he is able to argue more convincingly than ever that a person who has made wisdom his or her "nature" cannot possibly lose that wisdom—especially when observation of spiritual practitioners assures us that erroneous views have little power even *before* wisdom has been integrated at an experiential level, i.e., before there has occurred a direct realization of no-self.

Dharmakīrti's commentators add only a little to his discussion here. According to Devendrabuddhi, "Even earlier, the stains do not have the power to damage the mind because, being aspects that are superimposed, they are effected by the force of non-entities, and because they are inimical to authoritative cognition. Therefore, later, when the accustomed vision of no-self has been established, [the stains] have no power in a mind that has the self-nature of the path whose nature is that [vision]."[62] Prajñākaragupta specifies that "earlier" refers to the time when one cultivates wisdom via study (*thos pa*) and reflection (*bsam pa*).[63] If stains have little power even at that time, how much less power will they have when one cultivates wisdom "directly," via meditation (*sgom pa*). mKhas grub rje specifies even more precisely that "Later, at the time of the mental equipoise of *ārya* trainees who

62 *dri ma rnams kyi sems la sngar yang gnod pa byed par nus pa ma yin te/ sgro btags ba'i rnam pa sgo nas dngos po med pa'i stobs kyis zhugs pa'i phyir dang/ tshad ma'i grogs med pa nyid kyi phyir ro/ yang gang las phyis te/ bdag med pa mthong ba goms pa grub pa na de'i rang bzhin lam de'i bdag nyid can gyi sems la nus pa med pa nyid yin no/ Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 177:7 - 178:1.

63 *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 268:6.

have manifested[64] the self-nature of that wisdom that realizes the no-self, the stains do not have the power to generate flaws. Also, earlier, at the time when [truths] are established via study and reflection, [the stains] do not have the power to destroy even that wisdom that realizes no-self by way of generic images."[65] Mi pham ties Dharmakīrti's comments specifically to the argument of verses 206c-207c by reïterating the fact that the mind described here is a "correct" mind (*yang dag pa'i blo*), and that such a mind, effected by the reality of entities just as they are, objectively impelled, will not stray from its correct apprehension.[66]

Thus, the mind of someone who has made natural the correct apprehension of reality—as without self—cannot deviate from that apprehension, for the "stained" apprehension that there *is* a self is not effected by any real entity, and thus has no "power-base" from which it might damage the correct apprehension. It is perhaps worth briefly mentioning here that the usage of "nature," or "natural" is somewhat different from that in the previous section. There, the mind was said to be "naturally" luminous (*rang bzhin 'od gsal*), i.e., to have the primordial capacity to apprehend objects correctly. Here, the realization of no-self is spoken of as having "become natural" (*bdag [nyid du] gyur [pa]*). If that realization has *become* natural, then it must not have been primordially the case. "Foreign" to the mind, it must be "naturalized," as a citizen is. It *can*, of course, be naturalized precisely because it is the *correct* apprehension of reality, and any *particular* correct apprehension can become natural to the mind because the *general* nature of the mind is the correct apprehension of objects. This notwithstanding, there remain questions of whether the realization of no-self is not merely naturalized, but actually natural, to the mind, i.e., whether the mind may not, primordially,[67] realize no-self, only to have that realization covered by the arising of adventitious stains. The realization of no-self then would be not a process of *development* ("naturalization") but of *discovery* (return to what is primordially natural).[68] It is unclear from either Dharmakīrti or his commentators whether he believes that "naturalization" is a recovery of a

64 The Tibetan of the *Pramāṇavārttika* verse reads *bdag gyur*, glossed by most commentators as *bdag nyid du gyur pa*, "come to have as a self-nature." mKhas grub rje, however, adds a *mgnon tu* to the *gyur pa*, thereby making the latter refer to an act of direct perception that "manifests" phenomena.

65 *... phyis sems bdag med rtogs pa'i shes rab de'i bdag nyid du mngon du gyur pa'i phags pa bslob pa dag gi mnyam bzhag gi gnas skabs su dri ma rnams kyis nyes pa bskyed pa'i nus pa med de/ sngar thos bsam gyis gtan la bebs pa'i gnas skabs su yang/ bdag med don spyi'i tshul gyis rtogs pa'i shes rab kyang 'joms pa'i nus pa med pa'i phyir/ rGyas pa'i bstan bcos*, Gurudeva, *mKhas grub rje gSung 'bum*, vol. da, 182:1-2.

66 *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 357:6 - 358:1.

67 By "primordially" I mean both (a) prior to its enmeshment in saṃsāra (though such an *illud tempus* is more hypothetical than real), and (b) possibly, in any instant of direct perception before the imposition of "judgments." An intriguing suggestion to this effect is found in the passage from Prajñākaragupta (*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 267:1-3, cited above), where he discusses the arising of the illusion of permanence *even as* we are perceiving impermanence. The implication may be that the perception of impermanence is natural and primordial, but simply lost through conditions, i.e., a mind that *desires* permanence.

68 I am indebted to Anne C. Klein for these terms and this distinction, which may be seen as underlying many Buddhist doctrinal disputes, in India, China, Tibet, and Japan.

wisdom that is always there or the creation of a perspective that is new. Regardless, the different usage here of "natural" opens onto an important set of issues in Buddhist thought, to which we shall return briefly in the next part of the paper.

> [Tib 209c-210b] Even if [stains] do have power, in an entity with the potential ability to generate that which damages [the stains] they have no power to abide long, as fire [will not burn long] on damp ground.

Though in principle stains cannot affect a mind that has correctly apprehended the nature of reality, Dharmakīrti concedes for the sake of argument that *some* stains may arise in such a mind. He insists, however, that those stains will not be able to last long, because conditions in a realized mind are fundamentally inimical to them, just as wet ground is inimical to the setting of a fire—even if one is set, it will soon go out. The unstated objection that Dharmakīrti entertains here is simply another form of the argument refuted in 205d-206d. There, the skeptical opponent tried to argue that a realized mind could be stained because wisdom and defilement are symmetrically related; here, the skeptic would imply that as long as one has not completely eliminated *all* flaws, they may yet return.

Devendrabuddhi explains that the mind that has identified itself with the path that is the realization of the nature of reality, i.e., no-self, has a nature such that it is harmful to delusion, so no delusion can remain long in that mind;[69] this is so because "*a* has a nature such that it is able to effect damage to *b* when [in its presence] *b* does not arise,"[70] as, for example, damp ground eventually extinguishes any fire that is set on it. Prajñākaragupta understands the unstated objection as follows: "Even if an *arhant* has naturalized faith, etc., may he not decline from arhantship? How is it that flaws will not arise?"[71] The answer, as before, is that flaws, even if they do arise, will not persist. rGyal tshab rje identifies the "saint" in question not as an *arhant* but as a non-returner,[72] while dGe 'dun grub considers him a once-returner,[73] and mKhas grub rje specifies that he he is an "*ārya* trainee," i.e., anyone who has directly realized no-self (a stream-enterer, once-returner or non-returner), but is still on a "training path" (*slob lam*) and therefore has not yet reached the path beyond training (*mi slob lam*), which is that of the *arhant*.[74] mKhas grub rje's explanation seems to me the most plausible, since an *arhant* has, by definition, removed all possible flaws, whereas any of the three *āryapudgalas* below an *arhant*

69 *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 178:2-4.

70 *... gang zhing gang la gnod pa can skyed nus pa'i/ snying po can yin pa de ni de la shin tu skye ba ma yin te/ Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 178:3.

71 *gal te dad pa la sogs bzhin pa'i dgra bcom pa yang/ dgra bcom pa nyid las nyams par 'gyur ba ni ma yin nam/ des na ji ltar skyon rnams mi skye ba yin zhe na/ Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, 268:7 - 269:1.

72 *rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed*, 335.

73 *Tshad ma rnam 'grel rnam par bshad pa*, 141:2.

74 *rGyas pa'i bstan bcos*, Gurudeva, *mKhas grub rje gSung 'bum*, vol. da, 182:2-3.

still has flaws remaining to be uprooted, and the presence of those flaws could, in fact, raise questions about their possible damage to the *ārya*'s mind.[75] mKhas grub rje goes on to explain that the only time at which any flaw might arise in an *ārya* trainee's mind is during "post-attainment" (*rjes thob*), those periods following meditation sessions when entities continue to *appear* as if they have a self—during meditation itself no such appearance is possible.[76] These flaws, however, will not last long, because the *ārya*'s mind "has become an entity whose nature has the powerful capacity to generate in the [mental] continuum the wisdom directly perceiving no-self, which directly damages the self-grasping that is the root of all faults."[77]

Thus, although it is true that a mind that has undergone a fundamental transformation has not necessarily eliminated *all* flaws (since it is not yet completely enlightened), those flaws cannot possibly last long in such a mind because its *nature* has become such that it is completely identified with the antidote to such flaws. That antidote is a correct apprehension of the no-self that is the nature of entities, and, being correct, it is rooted in reality, hence powerful. The flaws, on the other hand, not being grounded in reality, are baseless, and therefore impotent, and will soon disappear, even if they do briefly arise in some circumstances in the mind of an *ārya*.

> [Tib 210c-211b] That which has the nature of being free from harm and objectively correct cannot be reversed by its opposite, even with effort, because thought holds to the side [that is natural].

Dharmakīrti concludes his discussion of the mind's luminosity by reiterating the point with which he began, namely, that the correct apprehension of phenomena cannot be replaced by an incorrect apprehension, because the former is natural to the mind, whereas the latter is not—and that which is natural is by definition better established than that which is adventitious or accidental. Thus, even if for some reason an *ārya* should *wish* to apprehend reality incorrectly, or to generate faults, he or she will be unable to do so, because the correct apprehension of entities as with-

75 mKhas grub rje's explanation may be the most plausible in terms of the logic of "stages and paths" (*sa lam*), with which Tibetans are greatly concerned, but it must be admitted that *āśrayaparivṛtti* is taken in most Yogâcāra literature as synonymous with the attainment of *dharmakāya*, and hence with a complete enlightenment akin to that of the *arhant*. Dharmakīrti does not specify that *āśrayaparivṛtti* is the topic here, and there is no real basis for ascertaining his sense of the term in the verse where he does use it, 205cd, above; thus plausible arguments could probably be made for either Prajñākaragupta's or mKhas grub rje's reading here. I would like to thank John P. Keenan for drawing this point to my attention.

76 *rGyas pa'i bstan bcos*, Gurudeva, *mKhas grub rje gSung 'bum*, vol. da, 182:3.

77 *nyes pa thams cad kyi rtsal ba bdag 'dzin la dngos su gnod pa can gyi bdag med mngon sum du rtogs pa'i shes rab rgyud la bskyed pa'i nus pa mthu can snying po can gyi dngos por gyur pa'i phyir*/ *rGyas pa'i bstan bcos*, Gurudeva, *mKhas grub rje gSung 'bum*, vol. da, 182:3-4.

out self has become natural to the mind, and this makes it impossible for faults to arise—since faults are based on the mistaken apprehension that there exists a permanent, substantial self.

Devendrabuddhi glosses the verse as follows: "When insight has become natural, then even if one makes an effort to view things in a faulty manner, [that faulty view] will not occur, because insight is a virtue, and because the faults are the inverse [of actuality], so there will be no effort to generate them."[78] Further, a mind that apprehends reality correctly is by nature beyond being harmed;[79] indeed, having the nature of being objectively correct, it is itself harmful to any view that is the inverse of what is objectively correct. dGe 'dun grub explains more precisely that "[a] person in whom there has occurred a complete basic transformation, even if he has made an effort [to produce a fault] via an inverted [view], cannot restore that which has been abandoned, because [such a person] is not harmed by *saṃsāra*, because, cognizing perceptually a real object (*yang dag pa'i don*), he has had that [correct cognition] enter the nature of his mind, and because his thought [thereafter] holds to the side of the wisdom realizing no-self."[80] rGyal tshab rje specifies that it is an *arhant* that here is in question, and that he simply cannot restore inverted views, because a mind that realizes no-self apprehends in that way in all respects (*rnam pa kun tu*), without being harmed by the proximity of its contradictory condition, *saṃsāra*.[81] Finally, Mi pham, in a sort of grand summation of the entire discussion, argues that any effort to cultivate flaws in a realized mind will fail because "any flaw is baseless, and therefore harmless; and [because the mind in question] is a mind that, objectively impelled [apprehends] the actuality of real objects. [The mind] having attained a basic transformation through intensive familiarization, [correct apprehension] has become natural to that mind. Even if there is an effort to reverse that via an inverted perspective, one canot reverse it, because there cannot be a condition that can turn a mind away from holding to the side that is correct perception of an object."[82]

78 *... lhag mthong yin la 'bad rtsol yang nyes pa mthong ba'i sgo nas byed par gyur na/ de yang 'di la yod pa ma yin te/ lhag mthong ni yon tan yin pa'i phyir dang/ nyes pa rnams ni phyin ci log yin pa'i phyir bskyed pa la 'bad rtsol yod pa ma yin no/ Pramāṇavārttika-pañjikā*, 179:1-2.

79 *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, 179:2-5.

80 *gnas gyur mthar phyin pa'i skyes bu chos can/ phyin ci log gis 'bad du zin kyang spangs pa slar mi zlogs te/ 'khor ba'i 'tshe ba med pa dang/ yang dag pa'i don mngon sum du rtogs shing de sems kyi rang bzhin la bzhugs pa'i phyir dang/ khyod kyi blo ni bdag med rtogs pa'i shes rab de'i phyogs 'dzin pa'i phyir ro/ Tshad ma rnam 'grel rnam par bshad pa*, 141:3-5.

81 *rNam 'grel thar lam gsal byed*, 336.

82 *nyes pa gang gi yang rten min pas 'tshe ba med pa dang/ dngos po'i stobs kyis zhugs pa gnas lugs yang dag pa'i don can gyi blo yin pa dang/ ches goms pa'i gnas gyur thob ste blo de'i rang bzhin can du gyur pa 'di la ni zlog phyogs phyin ci log gis 'bad du zin kyang mi zlog ste/ blo ni yang dag pa'i don du gyur pa de yi phyogs 'dzin pa las zlog nus kyi rgyu mtshan mi srid pa'i phyir ro/ Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgya chen bshad pa rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 358:4-6.

With verses 210c-211b Dharmakīrti and his commentators complete their discussion of the nature of mind and why that nature assures that a realized mind cannot be seriously flawed. In the next part of the paper, then, we will turn to a brief consideration of some of the implications of this discussion, for both Indian and Buddhist thought and for epistemology in general.

Implications

Epistemologies are not generally categorized by the cheerfulness or gloominess of their assessment of the nature and potential of human knowledge. If they were, however, there is little doubt that Dharmakīrti's insistence that the mind is naturally luminous and its stains adventitious would set him off as an epistemological optimist. Not only does he believe that the mind naturally illuminates, or cognizes, objects as they really exist, and that the objectivity of a correct cognition gives it a power that error can never match; he also believes that certain correct cognitions are of such crucial spiritual importance that their experiential integration can make the difference between remaining in *saṃsāra* and achieving *nirvāṇa*. More clinically, we might describe the Dharmakīrti of *Pramāṇavārttika* II.205b-211a as a "realist mystic," realist because he sees consciousness as effected by entities as they "really are," mystic because he believes that certain realities, profoundly realized, utterly transform one's consciousness from a worldly to a supramundane awareness.

A close examination of the discussion of the mind's nature by Dharmakīrti and his commentators yields six propositions, some explicit, some implicit: (1) An entity's nature is that which is inseparable from it; that nature may be both primordial and acquired; (2) It is the nature of mind to cognize objects correctly, as they actually exist; (3) Correct cognition is more natural and powerful than erroneous cognition, because it is objectively impelled; (4) Erroneous cognition is baseless, hence finally extrinsic, adventitious, and impotent; (5) Certain correct cognitions have soteriological value; and (6) The Buddhist analysis of the actual mode of existence of entities—as without self—is correct. We will briefly analyze each of these propositions in turn, concerning ourselves particularly with the presuppositions and problems that each entails.

> (1) An entity's nature is that which is inseparable from it; that nature may be both primordial and acquired.

It is, of course, part of the rhetoric of many Buddhist philosophical systems that no entity possesses a self-nature (Skt *svabhāva* [lit. "self-existence"], Tib *rang bzhin* [lit, "as it is in itself"]). Self-nature—especially as it may imply an *ātman*—certainly is denied on an ultimate level, but conventionally most Buddhists use the term just as other Indian and Western philosophers do: to refer to the innate or inherent character of an entity. In this sense, the Dharmakīrtian tradition's insistence that "the nature of nature" is to be that (a) which is inseparable from an entity, and (b) in

the absence of which an entity is not identifiable as itself, is not especially controversial—as long as the usage of such loaded terms as *sātmya* ("self-nature," *bdag nyid*) and *dharma* ("characteristic," *chos*) remains conventional.

If there is an aspect of the tradition's definition of "nature" that may be problematic, it is the insistence on the term's double sense: nature may be primordial, i.e., that which is innate to an entity, but it also may be acquired, i.e., that which has *become* natural. In English we speak of "a natural" in any field as someone with an inborn ability. We also have terms for a "naturalized citizen" or a habit that has become "second nature." The latter, however, are not natural in the same sense as that with which one was born—they are *as if* they were innate or inherent. The difference may not seem significant, but if a quality has been acquired rather than having always been present, there is likely to be some doubt as to its "inseparability" from the entity in question, hence the degree to which it ever can be as "natural" as a quality with which one was born. As we shall see, this definitional problem has important implications for Dharmakīrti's attempt to argue that a mind "accustomed" to the cognition of no-self is essentially free from any tendencies toward a contrary view.

> (2) It is the nature of mind to cognize objects correctly, as they actually exist.

The type of "nature" asserted here is clearly the mind's *primordial* or innate nature: the general characteristic of all minds at all times is the correct apprehension of objects. The usage of "nature" here is not, therefore, problematic, nor is the specification that it is the mind's nature to cognize objects—this latter could be part of any functional definition of mind, whether Indian or Western. What is problematic here is the specification that the mind cognizes objects *correctly, as they actually exist.* If the mind cognizes objects as they actually exist, then they must exist in some definitive and definable way. They must, in short, have characteristics that are independent of and extrinsic to the mind that cognizes them. This is, of course, "realism," which itself entails both epistemological foundationalism—for there *is* a basic, discoverable way that an entity exists—and a correspondence theory of truth—for the mind's correct cognition of an entity is in accord, or corresponds, with the way that entity actually exists, independently of the cognition. Foundationalism and correspondence are increasingly in philosophical disrepute in the West, where there has been a recognition at least since Kant that we cannot be certain that we really know things in themselves; rather, we know things though our subjective categories, perspectives, interpretive schemes, or cultural and linguistic constructs. What we know, in short, is not things, but knowledge itself, in the process of constituting—not discovering—the world. Such a recognition may or may not entail relativism and idealism, but it certainly entails a kind of "pessimism" about our capacity to really cognize in the way that Dharmakīrti insists we do.

It is not, of course, only in the West that doubt has been cast on our ability to cognize objects correctly. Indian thought, both Hindu and Buddhist, has raised any number of objections to realism, from Cārvāka critiques of the "authorities"

(*pramāṇas*) through which we know the world, to Vedāntin discussions of the world as *māyā*, to Mādhyamika deconstructions of the "actual" entities and concepts we think we know, to Yogācāra arguments that the world is mind-only (*cittamātra*) or concept-only (*vijñaptimātra*). Indeed, Dharmakīrti himself argues for "concept-only" in the third (*Pratyakṣa*) chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. The fact that he employs realism in one place and argues for "idealism" in another may mean that the two are in fact harmonious (especially if the former is used for conventional epistemology and the latter for ontology and soteriology), but it might also mean that he has not worked through all the conventional implications of his ultimate view. How can we know the "independent," "objective" nature of entities if they are in fact conceptually dependent and subjectively constituted? The reply might very well be (after the fashion of Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā*) that we know them as we know things in a dream—they *function* objectively, though they are *actually* constituted by thought, but the dream analogy may itself create as many problems as it solves.[83] In any case, regardless of whether Dharmakīrti's thought as a whole is internally consistent or not, there is no question but that the realism he adopts in the second chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* is *not* the only possible view of the mind's nature—and that a case can be made for epistemologies (conventional as well as ultimate) that are far less sanguine than Dharmakīrti's regarding the mind's ability to cognize objects as they actually exist.

> (3) Correct cognition is more natural and powerful than erroneous cognition, because it is objectively impelled.

While arguing that the nature of mind is to cognize objects correctly, the Dharmakīrtian tradition also insists on the asymmetry of the relationship between correct and erroneous cognitions. The correct may replace the incorrect, but the incorrect may not replace the correct, because a correct cognition is effected by the actual nature of the entity being cognized, while an incorrect cognition is effected by what is *not* the nature of the entity, or by what is not the entity at all. Thus (to return to the language of the previous section), the correct cognition has a *foundation* in reality, while an erroneous cognition does not, and we know that that which is built on a real foundation is more enduring than that which is not. From a common-sense perspective, this is an immensely appealing argument. Do we not, in fact, observe that our mind constantly corrects its cognitions, and that a cognition, once sublated by a more satisfactory cognition, will have no power to return, because it has been shown to be baseless?

There are problems here, however, some of them similar to those discussed in relation to proposition (2). If there is no objective "way things are," then what can impel a "correct" cognition? If there are no foundations, then what makes a "correct" cognition any more powerful than—or even different from—an "erroneous" one? There are additional difficulties. The most significant, perhaps,

83 It presupposes, for example, the existence of an "awakened" state that sublates ordinary waking experience in the same way that ordinary waking experience sublates a dream.

is that there seems to be a circularity built into the proposition: a cognition is ascertained to be "powerful" and "natural" because it is "objectively impelled," but its objectivity, in turn, is ascertained by its power, which demonstrates its naturalness, which of course assures its objectivity—since mind's nature is to cognize objectively. If our sense of "objectivity" turns out to be rooted in cognitions that have "power," then it may *not* be based on "the way things are," since today's objective and compelling cognition may be sublated by tomorrow's correction, and tomorrow's by the next day's, and so forth. If this is the case, then we may have less confidence in the "power" of a "correct" cognition, since it may turn out, in light of later developments, to have been incorrect. Dharmakīrti presumably would argue that there is no such infinite regress of corrections, and that there *is* a way things finally are, at least in a conventional sense: fire is hot, a rope is not a snake, entities are impermanent. When we have arrived at an understanding of any of these facts, we have attained a correct cognition, and there is no further cognition that could sublate it. This assertion, however, returns us to the problem of the possibility of an objective "nature," which, like the power of a "correct" cognition, is perhaps more useful than it is demonstrable.

> (4) Erroneous cognition is baseless, hence finally extrinsic, adventitous, and impotent.

This proposition is naturally entailed by those that have preceded it, for if it is the nature of mind to cognize objects correctly, and a correct cognition has power because it is effected by actual entities, it stands to reason that erroneous cognitions, not being based on actual entities, cannot have any power, and cannot be "natural" to the mind. The problems faced by this assertion are of course those raised above in regard to Dharmakīrti's "realism," but other issues arise as well.

Quite aside from the problem of determining what may and may not be erroneous and how we would know this, there seems to be some question whether correct cognition can be said to be "natural" to the mind, and error—as asserted here—adventitious. The problem is in a certain sense logical, and hinges on the specification—made in proposition (1)—that the "nature" of something is either primordial or acquired. If the "nature" of the mind is the correct cognition of objects, this nature must be either primordial or acquired. Either way explanatory difficulties seem to arise. If the mind's natural "luminosity" (i.e., correctness) is *primordial*, then the question arises as to how error ever could have come into existence, let alone prevailed over this natural luminosity. Thus, it becomes difficult to account for error, and tempting to think that we may already be enlightened.[84] If, on the other hand, the mind's natural luminosity is *acquired*, then we must ask how "natural" it really is, since what is natural to an entity is inseparable from it, while luminosity has been separate from the mind until it was acquired. Indeed, we might push this line of argument still further, and point out that Buddhists traditionally ar-

84 On the problem of error in Buddhist epistemology, see, e.g., Karl Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963), 187ff.

gue that our erroneous ways are in fact beginningless. If this is the case, they are in a certain sense primordial, and such correct cognitions as we acquire may simply be temporarily useful "superimpositions" onto a fundamentally erroneous nature!

Dharmakīrti could no doubt reply to this that the mind's *general* capacity to cognize correctly is primordial, while *specific instances* of correct cognition—e.g., the hotness of fire, the rope that is not a snake, and the impermanence of entities—are acquired, and that as acquired instances of a primordial capacity they become natural as soon as they are acquired. He might also point out that while this capacity for correct cognition is primordial, the question of how error "came into existence" does not arise, since error too is primordial. If both luminosity and error are primordial, it is clear that being primordial is not a sufficient condition for being "natural." Dharmakīrti would, accordingly, appeal to the fact that luminosity is "natural" because it is rooted in the actual natures of actual entities, while error is not. This returns us, of course, to the issue of "actual" entities, and to the problems that may be entailed by assuming such entities to exist and effect cognition.

(5) Certain correct cognitions have soteriological value.

Here, at last, the epistemology outlined in the first four propositions is applied to the great matters of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* with which Buddhists have traditionally concerned themselves. The logic that is applied is simple: our various superimposed errors prevent us from attaining particular goals that we may have as human beings; every goal is attainable through identifying and mastering the correct cognition that leads to the attainment of that goal; *ergo*, there exists a correct cognition that has the power to effect our spiritual goals.[85] Like most Hindus and Buddhists, Dharmakīrti assumes that liberation *is* an attainable goal for human beings, and that what is therefore required for its attainment is what is required for the attainment of any attainable goal, namely mastery of a crucial fact or principle or entity, cognition of which eliminates the erroneous apprehensions that stand between us and the goal.

If we accept for a moment that spiritual liberation *would* be preceded by a "correct cognition" rather than by, say, an experience of faith or an act of divine grace, then what appears most problematic is the assumption that liberation is as self-evidently attainable a goal as, say, writing a book, learning to dance, or understanding quantum mechanics. The possibility of liberation is *not* self-evident in the way that these other possibilities are, and it appears to beg the question somewhat to appeal to the ways in which conventional goals are attained to *demonstrate* that an ultimate goal can be attained. After all, just as it is conceivable that there are conventional goals that are unattainable, and which do not, therefore have *any* correct

85 This line of reasoning is suggested by the opening statement of Dharmakīrti's *Nyāyabindu*: "All human accomplishment is preceded by correct cognition" (*samyagjñānapūrvikā sarvapuruṣārthasiddhir*). For a discussion of its implications see Jackson, "Buddha as *Pramāṇabhūta*," 339ff.

cognition preceding their attainment, so it may be that some or all ultimate goals are unattainable, and hence do not have any correct cognition preceding them.

Even if we accept that liberation may exist on a continuum with other goals, it is different enough from "ordinary" goals that the *type* of correct cognition preceding it differs qualitatively from the cognition that precedes the attainment of ordinary goals. Granted, the attainment of all goals is preceded by the "realization" of a necessary fact, principle or entity, but the realization of the sort of principle that will liberate us from *saṃsāra*, e.g., no-self, must come through a special type of cognition, the union of meditative tranquility and insight, and the very "specialness" of this type of cognition makes its effectiveness more problematic than the effectiveness of the realization that precedes a conventional goal. Certainly, we cannot assume the power of meditative states any more than we can assume liberation; and just as we can imagine that liberation is unattainable because it is not self-evidently attainable and because we know that some goals are unattainable, so we may imagine that meditation is fruitless just as some conventional types of cognition may be fruitless.

Dharmakīrti would reply, no doubt, that even though the realization required to free us from *saṃsāra* may be of a special kind, if the principle realized is true, then that realization will operate just as conventional realizations do: being true, it has a foundation in reality, and being founded, it effects a powerful cognition that cannot be supplanted by the unfounded error that it has supplanted. In short, a realization is a realization: whatever its mode of operation, however common or rare it may be, if it actually is a realization, i.e., correct cognition, then it will have the power that all correct cognitions have—for it will have become the "nature" of the mind that has attained it. This is reasonable within the terms that Dharmakīrti has set for the discussion (we have already raised some of the problems they may entail), but it still begs the question whether liberation is attainable and whether, even if it is attainable, it *must* be attained via correct cognition rather than through, e.g., faith, divine grace, "accidents," etc. Dharmakīrti might argue that these latter entail cognition even if that cognition is not explicit, but to argue thus he must reduce the explanations of others to his own terms, a risky undertaking in any realm, and especially so in the religious.

> (6) The Buddhist analysis of the actual mode of existence of entities—as without self—is correct.

Even if we were to accept all of the propositions enunciated above, and grant with Dharmakīrti that the mind's nature is the correct cognition of objects, and that specific "naturalized" cognitions cannot be supplanted by the errors they have replaced, and that there does exist a cognition the realization of which effects the goal of liberation from *saṃsāra*, it still remains possible that the soteriological assumptions of Dharmakīrti's arguments may not be borne out, for the simple reason that the crucial principle realized in Buddhist meditation may turn out to be false. After all, Buddhists would maintain that Hindus who agree with them on every one of the first five propositions *still* would not achieve liberation, because the principle whose realization they urged— e.g., *brahman* = *ātman*—turns out to be false. It is

known to be false because it accords with neither reason nor experience. Being false, it is baseless, hence entirely lacking in the sort of power that a true cognition has.

Naturally, Dharmakīrti assumes that the principle that Buddhists are urged to realize for the sake of liberation—no-self—is true, hence founded in reality, powerful, etc. However, just as *brahman* = *ātman* must, as a nonapodictic principle, be subjected to empirical and rational scrutiny and rejected if found wanting, so must no-self, which is itself not self-evident, and may turn out to have problems that lead to *its* rejection. Dharmakīrti, obviously, believes that it is true, and is willing, like many Buddhists, to argue for it. It is not my intention here to assess those arguments;[86] I hope merely to have raised the possibility that they *may* themselves be problematic, hence potentially "false" in the same way that Hindu arguments for, e.g., an *ātman*, are at least potentially false.

In the preceding, we have analyzed and criticized a number of Dharmakīrti's assumptions. We have entertained some of his possible rejoinders to specific criticisms, but it seems only fair in concluding this section to allow a brief *general* defense of the epistemology and ontology we have exposed. Dharmakīrti would argue, I think, that whatever the *ultimate* nature of entities—as, e.g., concept-only—*conventionally* we can only make sense of the world if we assume that (a) entities *do* have essential characteristics by which we might know them, (b) the mind itself has a nature such that it cognizes entities as they are, for it constantly sublates incorrect cognitions with correct cognitions, (c) correct cognitions derive their sublating power from some actual conventional nature that entities possess, (d) error *is* erroneous and is weaker than correct cognition precisely because it is not based on any actual nature of an entity, (e) correct cognition of the principle that undermines saṃsāric suffering should have the same sort of power as the correct cognition of any other fact about the world, and (f) that principle is no-self, which is correct because if there existed a self, we could not account for the changing world that is given to us in our every experience. By distinguishing carefully at the outset between ultimate and conventional levels of discourse, and bracketing the former, Dharmakīrti manages to present us with a pragmatic account of the power of *conventional* cognition. If pragmatism permits us to ignore the ontological problematic and accept that conventional account, then it is but a short step to acceptance of the power of *ultimate* cognitions, and then (though this is a separate procedure) to realization of the particular ultimate cognition described by Buddhists: the realization of no-self. In short, if we can accept that (a) Dharmakīrti's account of conventional cognition is at least conventionally true, (b) ultimate cognitions are on a continuum with conventional cognitions, hence function similarly, and (c) the Buddhist's ultimate cognition, of no-self, is true, then we will have effectively accepted his argument—and from his perspective, placed ourselves squarely on the path to liberation.

86 The most important argument against the doctrine of no-self, probably, is that it fails to account for continuity, and so fragments the world.

Conclusion

To reiterate very briefly: What is most interesting about Dharmakīrti's treatment of the ancient Buddhist concept of the mind's natural luminosity and the adventitiousness of its stains, is his analysis of luminosity in terms of the conventional nature of mind as the correct apprehension of objects, and the adventitousness of stains in terms of the incapacity of error to persist in a correctly cognizing mind because, relative to a correct cognition, it lacks a foundation in the way things actually exist. This conventional analysis is framed by, and points to, a soteriological analysis, in which it is demonstrated that precisely because mind's nature is such as it is, an ultimate correct cognition, like an *ārya*'s realization of no-self, cannot be replaced by its false contrary, and thus, that a liberated state is irreversible.

The Doctrine of Buddha Nature in Chinese Buddhism—Hui-K'ai on Paramārtha

John P. Keenan

The central emphasis on the doctrine of Buddha Nature in Chinese Buddhism contrasts starkly with its marginality in Indian Buddhism. Guarding against constant solicitation from Brahmanic influence, the major doctrinal trajectories of Indian Buddhism shied away from anything that seemed to suggest a Buddhist centrism: that there is any core reality, however august, ineffable, or hidden, from which all things come and to which all return. In India the Mahāyāna philosophers, both Mādhyamika and Yogâcāra, attempt to explicate the doctrine of emptiness, according to which all things are empty of any set essence (*svabhāva*) and arise only codependently. There was a clear hesitancy to affirm the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, with its affirmation of the central reality of an inner *garbha* underlying all the defilements of karmic living. Rather, as witnessed by Candrakīrti, the attitude of Mahāyāna thinkers seems to have been that the teaching about the pure *garbha* was nothing more than a clever upāyic method, in need of no comment from the more doctrinally sophisticated schools.[1] Centrist teachings that affirmed a unitary reality behind appearances were not absent from Buddhist India. They are repres-

1 See William G. Grosnick, "The Zen Master Dōgen's Understanding of the Buddha-nature in Light of the Historical Development of the Buddha-Nature Concept in India, China, and Japan," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1979), 80, n.19.

ented not only by the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. Some of the Maitreyan texts that signal the inception of Yogâcāra thought affirm a single reality of awakening in the light of which all else is mere illusion.[2] But they were marginal to the main currents of Mahāyāna thought. In rather short order, even these texts were filtered through the classical Yogâcāra of Asaṅga and shorn of any essentialist notions of Buddha Nature.[3]

The situation in China stands in marked contrast: the affirmation of the reality of Buddha Nature there became the hallmark of Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching. The early schools of Chinese Buddhist thinking were all centrist. Chi-tsang describes the "Six Houses and the Seven Schools" as grappling with the notion of the true being of original nothingness (*wu*[a]) underlying appearances (*yu*[b], meaning being). Chi-tsang describes the doctrine of the School of Original Nonbeing:

> Tao-an ... said that non-being (*wu*) lies prior to the myriad kinds of evolution, and that emptiness (*k'ung*[c]) is at the beginning of the multitudinous shapes [of physical things]. Man's impediment consists in being confined to the secondary [sphere of] being.[4]

Here emptiness is not the Indian notion of essence-free being, but simply a synonym for original nonbeing. All subsequent traditions of Chinese Buddhism had perforce to address this centrist pattern of early Buddhist thinking in the Middle Kingdom, whether to simply affirm the underlying reality of Buddha (or Buddha Nature) or to question it. Chih-i of T'ien-t'ai developed his doctrine of the threefold truth in direct contrast to prior centrist notions of truth and emptiness, notions that saw an ineffable yet true reality underlying everything.[5] Fa-tsang of Hua-yen

2 By "Maitreyan texts" I mean principally the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra*, the *Madhyântavibhāga*, and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, although it seems probable that the original stanzas of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* also belong to this circle; the Tibetan translation ascribes this text to Maitreya. Two passages from the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra* will suffice: "In truth there is nothing else than it [i.e., the Reality Element] in the world, yet the whole world is confused about it! How has this singular folly come about, making one cling to what does not exist and discard what does?" (Sylvain Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra: exposé de la doctrine du grand véhicule selon le système yogācāra* [2 vols., Paris, 1907-11], I.58), and "Although Suchness is in all [living beings] without differentiation, when it is pure it is the essence of the Tathāgata; and so all living beings possess its embryo" (ibid., I.40). This last passage, together with its commentaries, is discussed in detail in the paper by Griffiths elsewhere in this volume.

3 See my introduction in Paul J. Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening: A Translation and Study of the Tenth Chapter of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṅgraha* (New York, 1989), 14-32, on how the classical Yogâcāra of Asaṅga filtered out these Tathāgatagarbha notions.

4 See Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy* (2 vols., Princeton, 1953), II.243.

5 Paul L. Swanson, in his *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism* (Berkeley, 1989), 18-37, outlines the dominant position on the polarity between true *wu* and delusory *yu* in early Chinese Buddhism. He sees early Chinese Buddhism as "discussing the two truths in terms of *yu* (meaning substantive Being when it was denied, and conventional existence when it was affirmed), and

[note continues]

goes beyond the Indian texts, which affirm Buddha Nature as a potential for Buddhahood, to hold that "everything, animate and inanimate, possesses Buddha Nature."[6] The Ch'an acceptance of Buddha Nature, as well as its constant deconstruction of the notion, both represent mature Chinese attempts to come to grips with the doctrine of the reality of Buddha Nature, understood as the core of Mahāyāna experience and teaching.[7]

The question is broad and this paper attempts to examine only one example of such a shift. It is well known that the first attempts of the Chinese Buddhists to grapple with the doctrine of emptiness led to the disappointing result that all seem to have interpreted emptiness in terms of Taoist notions of nonbeing—nonbeing understood as the fecund source of all that is. Only with time did the Chinese come to understand emptiness not as a metaphysical or mystical ultimate, but rather as an expression of detachment from the verbal fabrication that leads to all metaphysics. Here, the focus is limited to the Indian translator and thinker Paramārtha, for his work presents a lucid example of how Indian doctrinal ideas were strained through Chinese cultural filters. I first will show that in fact Paramārtha did alter śāstra texts to stress the notion of Buddha Nature. Then, following the account by his disciple Hui-k'ai, I will suggest, in the first place, that he did so in order to tailor Indian doctrine to a Chinese context, a context already imbued with centrist notions of one's original nature (*hsing*[d]) and, in the second place, that he did this by attempting to reclaim a pre-Asaṅgan version of Yogâcāra thought and to promote its doctrinal status to accord with Chinese cultural patterns.

The Textual Evidence

Throughout his translations and interpretations of classical Yogâcāra texts, Paramārtha consistently blends in material from Tathāgatagarbha traditions, stressing the reality of one's inherent, immutable Buddha Nature. He saw Tathāgatagarbha teachings not just as a clever method for catechesis, but as a central doctrinal teaching. The interpretations he offered formed the initial presentation of Yogâcāra in China and constituted the doctrinal stance of the She-lun school. They held sway until Hsüan-tsang, feeling confused and suspicious of their faithfulness to the Yogâcāra tradition, retrieved the more "orthodox" lineage of Dharmapāla from India. Where we have parallel translations by Paramārtha and by others it is obvious that he has added entire sections on the innate Buddha seed or Buddha

wu (meaning non-Being when it was affirmed and nonexistence when it was denied), a practice common in his time among exponents of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu." (37).

6 Francis Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel-Net of Indra* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1977), 51.

7 See Tamura Yoshirō, "Critique of Original Awakening Thought in Shōshin and Dōgen," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 11/2-3 (1984), 243-266.

Nature. Even in the absence of such comparative evidence, Paramārtha evinces strong preference for Tathāgatagarbha doctrine. Here, only a few passages are cited to establish Paramārtha's penchant for synthesizing Yogâcāra and Tathāgatagarbha doctrine.

One of the most famous passages of Yogâcāra comes from the no longer extant *Mahāyānâbhidharmasūtra* on the beginningless realm (*anādikāliko dhātuḥ*). As quoted by Asaṅga in his *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*, the passage says:

> The beginningless realm is the common support of all things. Because of this, there exist all the [six] destinies and the access to cessation.[8]

All the other translators of Asaṅga's text simply present "the beginningless realm" as the container consciousness, as do the commentaries of Asvabhāva and Vasubandhu. Paramārtha alone differs, for after presenting Vasubandhu's interpretation, his translation of Vasubandhu's commentary, the *Mahāyānasaṅgrahabhāṣya*, adds a unique explanation:

> The text [of Asaṅga] begins its explanation by saying that we should understand that the support of the knowable is termed the container consciousness, and that we should examine where the Bhagavat has spoken about and explained this consciousness. As the Bhagavat has explained in a stanza from the *Abhidharmasūtra*: "The beginningless realm is the common support of all things. Because of this, there exist all the [six] destinies and the access to cessation." Asaṅga quotes this scripture to demonstrate the nature and name of the container consciousness. The scripture is the *Mahāyānâbhidharma*, for this is where these words were spoken by the Bhagavat. This realm, whose nature is enlightenment, has five interpretations. First, its essential character is that all sentient beings are not apart from it, since it is not different from them. Second, it is cause, since the teachings of all saintly persons, the four stages of mindfulness [and all the other Buddha qualities] are engendered by focusing on this realm. The third is its arising: the Dharma Body attained by all saintly persons attains full perfection since they believe in and seek the path of this Dharma Realm. Fourth, it is reality, since in the world [this realm] is never destroyed, is transcendent, and is inexhaustible. And fifth, it is the seed (*garbha*), since if one lives in accord with the goodness of this doctrine he will grow within.... Understand that from the beginningless

8 Étienne Lamotte, *La somme du grand véhicule d'Asaṅga (Mahāyāna-Saṃgraha)* (2 vols., Louvain, 1938), II.12-13.

> beginning, as the scripture says, the Bhagavat [considers] this realm of consciousness to be the basis, support, and ground, always united with wisdom and never disjoined from wisdom. It is unconditioned and always characterized by the Buddha qualities more numerous than the sands of the River Ganges. It is also the basis, support, and ground for conditioned things, which are not united with, but disjoined from wisdom. This is why it is said that it is the common support of all things as the scripture says. Bhagavat, it is because the Tathāgata seed exists that people who do not understand say that transmigration exists, i.e., the [six] destinies exist, as the [*Mahāyānaâbhidharma*] scripture says. Bhagavat, if the Tathāgata seed did not exist, there would be no sense of oppression in suffering and no earnest seeking for cessation. This is why [the scripture] says that [because of it] there exists the access to cessation.[9]

Paramārtha has added this entire section directly to Vasubandhu's comentary,, presenting Asaṅga as affirming a centrist reality of an immutable, unconditioned Buddha Nature, the source and seed of Buddhahood. This point is reiterated in clear language in another passage from Paramārtha's translation of Vasubandhu's *Mahāyānasaṅgrahabhāṣya*. Vasubandhu comments on Asaṅga's statement that "the Essence Body is the Dharma Body, belonging to all Buddhas because it is the support for all things."[10] The two other Chinese translations of Vasubandhu's commentary (by Hsüan-tsang and Dharmagupta; Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna's Tibetan translation is missing for the first half of the tenth chapter) merely mention that this is so because the Essence Body is the support for coming to mastery in the joy of doctrine that flows from Dharma Realm.[11] Paramārtha goes further and attributes independent existence to the suchness and wisdom that constitute Dharma Body:

> Among these three bodies, if we say that the essence is the Dharma Body, then there are two basic points: that all obstacles are eradicated and that all radiant qualities are perfected. The essence is Dharma Body, for only suchness and true wisdom exist independently.[12]

In another passage, Paramārtha's version of Vasubandhu's commentary adds in no uncertain terms a centrist understanding of Buddha Nature:

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9 Taishō 31, 156c-157a.

10 Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening*, 49, 68.

11 Ibid., 68.

12 Ibid., 68.

> Although all sentient beings dwell in transmigration, yet there are none who originally lack the Dharma Body because they are perpetually joined to that Dharma Body. This joining is beginningless and attained by nature.[13]

In another section of Asaṅga's text Paramārtha interprets the term "own realm" from a passage Asaṅga quotes from the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṅkāra* to mean the Tathāgata Nature:

> The line reads: "it is because they have attained their own realm, but [adherents] to the two vehicles not having attained that realm lack these joys" ... "Realm" here means the Tathāgata Nature, the originally pure Dharma Body.[14]

These passages, and more could easily be cited, demonstrate that Paramārtha has interpolated into Asaṅga's and Vasubandhu's texts his understanding of Buddha Nature. The same pattern can be seen in other translations by Paramārtha. Of particular note is his discussion of the "pure consciousness" (*amalavijñāna*) in the *Chüeh-ting-ts'ang lun*, which parallels Hsüan-tsang's *Yuga lun*, both being translations of the *Yogâcārabhūmiśāstra*. To Paramārtha, all empirical consciousness is defiled, to be abandoned and destroyed upon realization of awakening. At that point one unites with a pure consciousness that is eternal and apart from any worldly defilement.

> If they realize the four truths and attain the clear understanding of the wisdom eye, then they will be able to destroy the container consciousness.... By cultivating meditation, they cut off the container consciousness and this itself is the turning around of their nature as worldlings.... Because the container consciousness is suppressed, they realize the pure consciousness. The container consciousness is transitory and contaminated, but the pure consciousness is eternal and uncontaminated.[15]

This usage of the notion of an eternal "pure consciousness" distinct from the other eight consciousnesses is specific to Paramārtha and reflects his attempt to elucidate the pure mind of the Buddha Nature within a Yogâcāra framework. All phenomenal consciousness, being nothing but coverings over that Buddha Nature, is to be destroyed and cut off. Here, the conversion of the support is not Asaṅga's notion of other-dependent consciousness turning from the imagined pattern to the

13 Ibid., 94.

14 Ibid., 109

15 Taishō 31, 1020b.

perfected, but rather a constituting of oneself in the totally transcendent dimension of the originally pure mind.[16] When Hsüan-tsang speaks of the conversion of support, Paramārtha often inserts the term "the pure consciousness."[17] While for Asaṅga's lineage this conversion takes place on the ground of other-dependent consciousness, for Paramārtha it is a falling away from all phenomenal consciousness that reveals the originally pure mind of Buddha Nature, the central reality of all realities. He writes:

> All conventional things have the container consciousness as their support. But all transcendent things ... have the pure consciousness as their support.[18]

Paramārtha's position is summarized by Chi-tsang, who in his *Chung-lun shu* remarks:

> The She-lun masters consider the eighth consciousness to be illusory and the ninth to be reality. However, they say that the eighth has two aspects: illusion and reality. Its awakened nature is reality; its karmic consciousness is illusion.[19]

The focus here is on the pure mind of Buddha Nature, in contrast to which all the states of ordinary consciousness are deemed to be defiled. Awakening is the uncovering of the always pure mind. As though to emphasize the point, at the end of Paramārtha's translation of the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha* he appends thirteen additional stanzas, ten of which are quoted directly from the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the principal exposition of Indian Tathāgatagarbha thought.[20] Apparently he saw the doctrine of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition as summarizing Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*. The question remains, however: why did Paramārtha slant Yogâcāra toward the doctrine of Buddha Nature?

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16 See John P. Keenan, "Original Purity and the Focus of Early Yogācāra," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5/1 (1982), 7-18.

17 Katsumata Shunkyō, *Bukkyō ni okeru shinishikisetsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1969), 69.

18 *Chüeh-ting ts'ang lun*, ibid., 699.

19 *Chung-lun shu*, Taishō 42, 104c.

20 Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening*, 272-273. It is of parenthetical interest to note that Paramārtha's last quotation from the *Ratnagotravibhāga* prays that all might come "to see Amitāyus." There is reason to hypothesize that Pure Land devotion was present among Yogācāra philosophers. See ibid., 30-39, and John P. Keenan, "Pure Land Systematics in India: The Buddhabhūmisūtra and the Trikāya Doctrine," *The Pacific World* 31 (1987), 29-35. This practice, if indeed the Yogācāra thinkers engaged in it, might help to explain why there is such a recommendation of faith in Amitābha recorded in *The Awakening of Faith* (See Hakeda Yoshito, *The Awakening of Faith* [New York, 1967], 102), and perhaps suggests that since Paramārtha here favors the practice, so also he is responsible for its appearance in *The Awakening of Faith*.

The Chinese Context

The cultural patterns of Chinese thought were set long before the advent of Buddhism to China. The basic structure of Chinese thinking is centric, focusing on an all-encompassing yet ineffable Tao as the source of all the changing phenomena that we experience. There is obviously empirical change, but it is a balanced change within a closed system, centered on Tao. For Chuang-tzu, for Lao-tzu, as well as for K'ung-tzu, Tao is the central reality around which people must form their lives. The Confucian gentleman (*chün-tzu*[e]) is precisely the person who embodies the ideal way (*tao*[f]) of the ancient kings, and through his example "balances" society. The Taoist adept is one who by the practice of nonaction acts in harmony with the ineffable Tao and lives in its power (*te*[g]). This centric pattern means not only that there is a center to which everything tends, but also that change itself is located within a cyclic or alternating cosmic harmony. It comes around and around; waxes and wanes. The cosmos itself is a single organism in which changes alternate from yin to yang within an overarching and pervasive Tao. Prominent in all the schools of Chinese thinking "is the belief that the universe is in a constant state of flux but that this flux follows a fixed and therefore predictable pattern consisting either of eternal oscillation between two poles (*yin-yang*[h]), or of cyclical movement within a closed circuit; in either case the change involved is relative rather than absolute, since all movement serves in the end only to bring the process back to its starting point."[21]

This central Tao is not, however, a linear point in primal time, but the principle underlying and permeating the organism that is the cosmos. It is, in Lao-tzu's words, the ineffable Tao:

> There is a thing confusedly formed,
> Born before heaven and earth.
> Silent and void
> It stands alone and does not change,
> Goes around and does not weary.
> It is capable of being the mother of the world.
> I know not its name
> So I style it "the way."[22]

21 Derk Bodde, "Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy," in *Studies in Chinese Thought*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Chicago, 1953), 21.

22 *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 25; D. C. Lau, *Tao Te Ching* (Harmondsworth, 1963), 82.

Although confused and silent, nevertheless Tao is the true ineffable reality lying behind experiences of change. Lao-tzu describes its reality both as substance and essence:

> Shadowy and indistinct,
> Yet within it is a substance.
> Dim and dark,
> Yet within it is an essence.
> This essence is quite genuine
> And within it is something that can be tested.[23]

Here the way (*tao*) is the unchanging center around which the universe moves. By attaining to that center one's actions turn spontaneously on "the hinge of the way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly."[24] Just so, by centering on the way, one lives and acts in harmony with the pattern of the cosmos. It is the ineffable center to which the sage conforms his or her actions by adopting the course of nonaction. A centrist pattern is evident not only in the Chinese approach to the cosmos; humans, conforming themselves to the way, have but to return to their inborn nature (*hsing*[d]). The Wai-p'ien and the Tsa-p'ien sections of the *Chuang-tzu* abound in references to the inborn nature, for it is the center within humans by returning to which we regain harmony with the Tao. "The inborn nature is the substance of life."[25] The goal for Chuang-tzu is to avoid losing "the original form of one's inborn nature."[26] The entire sixteenth chapter of the *Chuang-tzu* discourses on the folly of trying to mend the inborn nature through the so-called virtues of civilization.

This early acceptance of a centrist pattern of thinking deeply influenced the understanding of Mahāyāna doctrine in China. It constituted the general terms in which the new ideas of Buddhist doctrine were fitted and domesticated. Hui-k'ai, a direct disciple and assistant of Paramārtha, offers an example of just how Indian notions were so fitted. He begins his preface to Paramārtha's translation of the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha* with an almost obligatory euology to the Tao:

> Truly, the excellent Tao is far-reaching, inconceivable, unfathomable, compassionate, impartial, conducive, and inexhaustible. Its virtue encompasses living beings and its truth is unbiased.[27]

23 *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 21; ibid., 78.

24 Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York, 1968), 40.

25 Ibid., 259.

26 Ibid., 99.

27 *She-ta-ch'eng hsü*, Taishō 31, 112b.

Here, Tao is not taken only as the all-encompassing center of reality, but also as that which is conducive for and encompassing of living beings. Hui-k'ai sets the pattern into which Paramārtha and his disciples translated the doctrine of the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*. He then immediately appends a warning against seeking refuge beyond this all-pervading Tao within a false understanding of transcendence.

> Nevertheless, it is easy to lose the path (*tao*) for a long time and to be bewildered by doubts difficult to resolve. If one places priority on enunciating transcendence, then doubts cannot be illumined.[28]

It sounds very much as though Hui-k'ai is here concerned lest his fellow countrymen focus their attention on emptiness, on the absence of any essential center. He seems to be setting the parameters within which he wants the teachings of the Buddhist Tao to be understood. He goes on to describe the history of the Buddha's doctrine in China, noting the chaotic conditions under which he lived and bemoaning the inadequacies of the Taoists who, although they have "intensely probed the way and its power," yet have done so "without any method; they searched the depths and traced out the source, but there was much they did not understand."[29] By contrast, Hui-k'ai and his fellow disciples found in Paramārtha's teachings a more perfect understanding of the way (*tao*) and devoted their lives to assisting him in his task of translating the Buddhist texts and enlightening the Middle Kingdom.

Of particular note is Hui-k'ai's description of the method Paramārtha used in translating Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*. Hui-k'ai explains:

> Thus the Dharma Master completed his translation of the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha* at the Chih-chih temple. He had already understood the text clearly and was quite aware of its Prakrit forms. All of its terms were elucidated and no meaning was left unclear. My teacher would sit on his mat until dawn without sleep. I, K'ai, was his attentive amanuensis who copied down what he said, chapter for chapter, word for word. Only after he had finished his examination of the text and translated its meaning did we issue the Chinese text. The translation was very difficult and it could not be rendered into elegant Chinese. When there were variants, we examined the differences and then were able to determine the meaning, for it is not permissible to issue a text while losing sight of its import. Thus, the present translation is a compromise between style and substance.[30]

28 Ibid., 112b.

29 Ibid., 112b-c.

30 Ibid., 113a.

This passage suggests that the translation was a shared endeavor. Note that Hui-k'ai says that he was faithful to Paramārtha's words, not to Asaṅga's words. Moreover, not only did Paramārtha interpret the text, but its import was elucidated, for it was not felt permissible to issue a text whose sense was not ascertainable. The variants mentioned by Hui-k'ai probably do not refer to divergent textual readings, for there is no evidence that the translators of these classical texts practised the critical methodology of modern scholars. Rather, these variants were most likely differences of interpretation. In this light, we can judge that the actual additions Paramārtha appended to the text were intended to explicate its import.

It is true that the text is difficult; indeed, it was being introduced into a culture without any knowledge of the contextual web in which its argument moved forward. The difficulty in understanding was not on Paramārtha's part, but on the part of the Chinese disciples. Paramārtha is said to have known both its meaning and all its Prakrit forms. The difficulty then was most likely in translating those ideas into clear Chinese. Moreover, Paramārtha's career in a war-torn and chaotic China leads one to question whether he really had command of classical Chinese.[31] It may well have been that Paramārtha needed the assistance of Chinese collaborators who did more than simply write down his every word. Paramārtha is credited with translating a number of texts into Chinese, but, unlike Hsüan-tsang, there is little consistency in terminology or style from one text to another. In light of Paramārtha's enforced travels throughout southern China, necessitated by the need to avoid the warfare and chaos that dogged the times, it is not surprising that consistency of translation never was achieved. He was translating into a foreign language and would no doubt have needed assistance with nuance and rhetoric.

In such a context it is not difficult to see how Paramārtha's additions could well have been regarded as mere elucidations of Asaṅga's text within its new cultural context. And that context was centrist to its core. The awareness that Mahāyāna presented a non-centrist doctrine that could not be filtered through Chinese centrist patterns had apparently not occurred.[32]

Hui-k'ai says that he had long searched out Taoist masters to obtain their wisdom. Yet, in his preface, he does not criticize the centrist pattern of their thought, but rather their lack of deep understanding and their lack of practice. He writes:

31 It is perhaps relevant to remember that Paramārtha never adopted China as his home, for toward the end of his days he attempted to sail home to India. A storm blew his craft back to the Chinese shore and, rather dejectedly, he spent the remainder of his days in China. Note may also be made that at one point he contemplated suicide. Such actions bespeak the homesickness of one never really inculturated into a foreign culture. See Diana Paul, *Philosophy of Mind in Sixth-Century China: Paramārtha's 'Evolution of Consciousness'* (Stanford, 1984), xx-xxxxx.

32 Swanson, in his *Foundations*, argues that it took the genius of Chih-i to both see the inadequacies of Chinese versions of Indian doctrine, and to develop a faithful and yet Chinese interpretation of that doctrine.

> They searched out the literal meaning of texts [but] their ideas were confused about the broad meaning. I began every morning with a sigh and frequently became dispirited. With my whole heart I enquired into the way according to their current practices, yet I failed to see the path.[33]

This tension was relieved upon encountering the Master Paramārtha who was "engrossed in the way" and "echoed its power." It would appear that the consistent pattern of Paramārtha's amanuensis reinforced Paramārtha's own predilection for the centrist themes of Buddha Nature.

This does not mean that Paramārtha invented a version of Mahāyāna Buddhism to fit the Chinese pattern. He did not have to do that, for there did exist in the Indian sources numerous passages that affirmed the Tathāgatagarbha teachings. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that the Yogācāra school arose quite probably from within the more theoretically inclined circles of Tathāgatagarbha thought.[34] The *Ratnagotravibhāga* is indeed a respected treatise of Indian Buddhist teachings on the reality of the inner *garbha*, although it remains the single Indian śāstra on the theme. The Maitreyan texts contain frequent references to ideas that present a centrist version of human nature. To take but a single example, the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanādasūtra* teaches:

> Blessed One, the understanding of the seed of a Tathāgata is the understanding of the emptiness of Tathāgatas.... There are two kinds of understanding in regard to emptiness, Blessed One. As empty, the seed of a Tathāgata is separate from, apart from, and distinct from the accumulation of defilement. As not empty, the seed of a Tathāgata is not separate, not apart from, not distinct from the inconceivable Buddha qualities, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges.[35]

Here, the *tathāgatagarbha* is seen as the truly existing reality of buddhahood, realized when the empty and unreal defilements fall away upon awakening. Paramārtha simply reclaimed these ideas and moved them to center stage, promoting what had been a marginal tradition in India to a place of central importance in Chinese Mahāyāna.

33 *She-ta-ch'eng hsü*, Taishō 31, 112b.

34 See my "Original Purity," and Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening*, 14-32.

35 Alex & Hideko Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā: A Buddhist Scripture on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory* (New York, 1974), 99.

Conclusion

The stark contrast between the marginal valuation of the doctrine of Buddha Nature in India (where, in many instances, we are not absolutely certain just what Sanskrit term it translates) and its centrality to Chinese Mahāyāna reflects the filtering of Indian doctrinal ideas through the centrist pattern of Chinese thinking. A clear example of this process can be seen in Paramārtha's alteration of Indian texts, and its motivation can perhaps be espied through Hui-k'ai's report of just how those translations were carried out.

Chinese characters

a 無
b 有
c 空
d 性
e 君子
f 道
g 德
h 陰陽

Buddha Nature Thought and Mysticism

Sallie B. King

The objective of this essay is to clarify the concept of mysticism through the study of texts in the *tathāgatagarbha*/Buddha Nature tradition. These texts might well be thought to express a 'mystical' philosophy. It is this possibility, and the presuppositions behind it, that I intend to examine in the present essay. Before considering the texts, however, we must pause to consider the term 'mysticism.'

Mysticism is a term for which there is no generally accepted definition. I myself have used a number of working definitions, including the following:

> A religious experience [or mystical experience] is an extraordinary moment of awareness or transformation of awareness which subsequently alters one's mode of self-conscious being-in-the-world. That is, it alters one's perception of oneself as self and person, and consequently, one's manner of living, or relating to one's surroundings.[1]

This is an essentialist definition, a definition which attempts to specify the essence of the phenomenon 'mysticism.' There is, however, a controversy surrounding mysticism which raises a question about the suitability of any such essentialist definition for mysticism. Some scholars believe that there is no such thing as mysticism as such, in the abstract, but only a variety of mystical phenomena which

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1 Sallie B. King, "Concepts, Anti-Concepts and Religious Experience," *Religious Studies* 14 (1978), 446.

differ according to the tradition within which they occur. For example, Gershom Scholem writes:

> There is no such thing as mysticism in the abstract, that is to say, a phenomenon or experience which has no particular relation to other religious phenomena. There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on.[2]

Since this debate is unresolved, it will be useful to pair any essentialist definition of mysticism such as the one with which I opened, with a discussion of the applicability of the concept of family resemblance to mysticism. Wittgenstein introduced the idea of family resemblance and Rem Edwards has applied it to the problem of defining religion.[3] This concept suggests that some words, such as 'game' or 'religion' successfully refer to a set of phenomena for all of whose members there is no *single* identifying core characteristic or quality, though the members of the set do share a whole *group* of characteristics in varying ways. The members of a human family, for example, resemble each other without all of them possessing the same kind of nose, the same color eyes, the same body type, and so forth; rather, a number of these characteristics is possessed in varying degrees and combinations by each.

When we apply this concept to mysticism we realize that it is not the case that all instances of mysticism need possess all characteristics of which we think when we speak of mysticism (union with God, ecstasy, voidness, detachment from the world, and so forth) in order for us to recognize a resemblance, which varies from instance to instance, among the phenomena called 'mystical.' Thus even if some common, essential characteristic shared by all mysticisms is difficult to identify, one can still proceed to discuss the family of mysticisms as a set of related or similar phenomena. In other words, one can speak about intense, life-changing religious experience without resolving one way or the other the question of possible unity among mysticisms.

While I am thus sympathetic to the essence-avoiding family resemblance approach to defining mysticism, and in cases when I do construct an essentialist definition I steer the definition towards breadth and inclusivity rather than precision and exclusivity, there is nonetheless one critical element which I insist upon in any attempt to clarify the concept of mysticism, and that is its experiential aspect. I agree with Ninian Smart that the term 'mysticism' refers to "the contemplative life and experience".[4] In my view:

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2 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (3rd ed., New York, 1941), 5-6.

3 Rem Edwards, *Reason and Religion: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York, 1972), 14ff.

4 Ninian Smart, "Interpretation and Mystical Experience," *Religious Studies* 1 (1965), 76.

> While no particular form of experience can be singled out as essential, it is critical to acknowledge that mysticism is based upon mystical experience in whatever particular form or forms that experience may take. It must be recognized that 'mysticism' refers to that group of phenomena comprised of mystical experience, practices and lifestyles conducive to mystical experience, speeches and writing composed on the basis of mystical experience, and lives transformed by mystical experience. While it is necessary, in connection with mysticism, to discuss literature, institutions, and persons, it must be remembered at all times that insofar as the subject of discussion is a mystical phenomenon, it always points beyond itself to mystical experience as such. The experiential element is not to be eliminated since it is the basis of all the other and related factors.[5]

In the background of attempts to define mysticism is the question of whether there is a single philosophy, or even a family of philosophical views, which can be regarded as representing a philosophy of mysticism, that is, a philosophical view which tends to accompany mystical experience. I will specify one prominent candidate for the label 'mystical philosophy' which is particularly relevant to the present paper. This view asserts the existence or reality of an indwelling or inherent principle of divinity or enlightenment, which principle constitutes the practical basis of the possibility of mystical experience, i.e., union or communion with the Divine, liberation, or enlightenment experience. Examples of this kind of view include: Quaker belief in That of God within, Christ within, or the Inner Light; Trinitarian Christian belief that the human soul is the Son which enters into loving communion with the Father, the joining of these in the Holy Spirit being their mutual love (as in Eckhart); Vedāntic Hindu belief in the identity of the Ātman with Brahman; and the Buddhist affirmation of the reality of Buddha Nature or *tathāgatagarbha*. These are all views in which the absolute distinction between the sacred and the profane is either overcome or is held never to have existed; divinity, sacrality, or enlightenment is in some sense present and available to a person as she or he lives in the profane, unenlightened human condition.

The point I wish to propose here is that it is misleading to conceive such philosophies as mystical. As I shall demonstrate below, there is no necessary connection between such views as those described above and the endorsement or advocacy of mystical experience. If there is such a thing as a mystical text it must be one that endorses mystical experience. The fact that a text propounds an ostensibly mystical philosophy is not in itself sufficient for it to be considered a mystical text, or even a text in a mystical tradition. So it is misleading to conceive of a 'mystical philosophy' as such, since there is an imperfect match between the philosophical

5 Sallie B. King, "Two Epistemological Models for the Interpretation of Mysticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56 (1988), 258.

view a text propounds, the kind of spiritual practice it either teaches or endorses, and the nature of the goal it values. I turn now to an examination of three points on Buddha Nature from the Chinese Buddhist canon in order to pursue this point.

The three texts under consideration in this paper are the *Buddha Nature Treatise*, the *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, and the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*. The last of these is extant only in the sixth century translation by Bodhiruci as *Fo shuo pu tseng pu chien ching*;[a] neither a Sanskrit nor a Tibetan version survives.[6] However, Sanskrit fragments of this text do survive as quotations in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and in other texts,[7] so it is generally assumed that the text did formerly exist in Sanskrit but was subsequently lost. The reconstructed Sanskrit title of the work is *Anūnatvâpūrṇatvanirdeśa*. It is a brief text and is not divided into chapters.

The *Buddha Nature Treatise* (*Fo hsing lun*[b]) is attributed to Vasubandhu (fourth century?) and was translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (499-569).[8] Only this Chinese version exists. The circumstances of the text's composition, translation, and transmission are all very little known. Another problematic point is the existence of quite a few passages in the text preceded by the term, "comment" (*shih yueh*[c]). It is not known who made these comments. Moreover, the attribution of this text to Vasubandhu is very much open to doubt; several Japanese scholars have debated this question. Takasaki Jikidō and Hattori Masaaki believe that the text was not translated by Paramārtha but rather written by him.[9] I tend to agree with this view, though it cannot be considered to have been definitively demonstrated. While awaiting the perhaps unattainable final resolution of all these difficulties, it is useful to bear in mind that the text was in some way in the hands of Paramārtha, either as author of the text as a whole, as author of the inserted comments, as translator, or in some combination of these roles. In this ambiguous sense we can identify the text as belonging to Paramārtha. It bears a message similar to many of the other texts which passed through his hands (several of these others also have their authorship debated; they may have been written by him but attributed to others) and which he bequeathed to later generations of East Asian Buddhists.

The *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, like the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*, claims to be the word of the Buddha; its title in Chinese is *Fo shuo wu shang i ching*[d]. Neither a Sanskrit nor a Tibetan version exists.[10] The reconstructed Sanskrit title is *Anuttarāśrayasūtra*. Like the *Buddha Nature Treatise*, the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* was translated by Paramārtha; according to Ui Hakuju the translation was made about

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6 The Chinese text is Taishō 668, 16, 466-468

7 See Takasaki Jikidō, "Fuzōfugengyō no nyoraizōsetsu," *Komazawa daigaku bukkyōgakubu kenkyū kiyō* 23 (1965), 88.

8 Taishō 1610, 31, 787-813.

9 Takasaki Jikidō, "Structure of the Anuttarāśrayasūtra (Wu shang i ching)," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 8 (1960), 35. I draw my citation of Hattori from Takasaki.

10 Taishō 669, 16, 468-477.

557.[11] As in the case of the *Buddha Nature Treatise*, Takasaki suspects that Paramārtha may have been responsible for more than just the translation of this text; it seems that he, or someone in his circle, may have written it as well.[12] So both works may have had the same author. Moreover, the amount of material common to the two texts is considerable and extends well beyond the *Buddha Nature Treatise*'s quotations from the *Supreme Basis Sūtra*. This textual concordance notwithstanding, the texts are markedly different in their overall tenor, particularly with regard to the subject of this paper.

These three texts all belong philosophically to the *tathāgatagarbha*/Buddha Nature tradition. Briefly, this tradition teaches that "all sentient beings possess Buddha Nature"[13] or *tathāgatagarbha* (the two terms may for present purposes be taken as synonymous). On one level this means that all intelligent beings possess the potential to achieve Buddhahood, or enlightenment, and that no one is inherently incapable of achieving liberation. On another level this statement is taken to mean that we are all "already" enlightened, that our true nature as sentient beings is wisdom and compassion, but that this true nature has been distorted and concealed from the beginningless past by ignorance and desire. Hence we must practice Buddhism in order to claim our birthright as sentient beings and return to our true, enlightened identity. In other words, we normally experience ourselves in the mode of a purely adventitious identity, but we can pierce this illusion as to who and what we are by Buddhist practice; our essential and inalienable identity is that we are enlightenment beings.

Our three texts share a common foundation in *tathāgatagarbha* thought. The *Buddha Nature Treatise* says simply, "all sentient beings possess Buddha Nature."[14] The *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, using the term *tathāgatadhātu* as a synonym for *tathāgatagarbha*, states that the bodhisattva, "relying on unobstructed wisdom throughout many lifetimes ... sees the *tathāgatadhātu* and gives rise to an extraordinary thought. S/he cries out, 'Sentient beings! The Tathāgata is within the persons of sentient beings!'"[15] The *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* speaks of the "realm of sentient beings" (the *sattvadhātu*) as being constituted by three conditions: (1) the *tathāgatagarbha* in its original pristine state; (2) the *tathāgatagarbha* in its original, impure state of concealment by defilements; and (3) the *tathāgatagarbha* in its future state of universality, the completion and perfection of all things.[16]

These examples show that Buddha Nature or *tathāgatagarbha* thought is a variety of what I am considering as an ostensibly mystical philosophy; it holds that the sacred (enlightenment) is present and available in the midst of the profane (the

11 Ui Hakuju, *Hōshōron Kenkyu* (Tokyo, 1960), 534.

12 Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra): Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Rome, 1966), 52.

13 *Buddha Nature Treatise*, 788c.

14 Ibid., 788c

15 *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, 470a.

16 *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*, 467b-c.

condition of the unenlightened person). The interesting thing about these three *tathāgatagarbha* texts is that though they all share this ostensibly mystical philosophy, two of them can be considered mystical texts and one cannot. Though they agree that the ultimate is immanent in the human individual, they differ on the significance of this notion for religious practice and for the goal of the religious life. Despite their shared apparently 'mystical' philosophy, the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* cannot be considered a mystical text because it negates the idea of mystical experience, whereas the *Buddha Nature Treatise* and the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* are mystical because they endorse mystical experience.

I will begin with the *Buddha Nature Treatise*. I have argued elsewhere[17] that the term 'Buddha Nature' functions in the *Buddha Nature Treatise* as a metaphor for Buddhist practice in which one engages with the hope of realizing enlightenment or Buddhahood. A few illustrations will defend this assertion. The text begins with the words, "Why did the Buddha speak of Buddha Nature?" It is significant that the opening question is not "What is Buddha Nature?" but instead a question which opens the discussion in a way conducive to understanding Buddha Nature language as *upāyakauśalya*, skillful means used to promote realization. We are told in answer to the question that the Buddha taught Buddha Nature in order to help people overcome five shortcomings (inferior mind, arrogance, delusion, slandering the truth, attachment to self) and to help produce in them five virtues (diligent mind, reverence, wisdom [*prajñā*], knowledge [*jñāna*], compassion).[18] In short, the point of speaking of Buddha Nature is to help people reach enlightenment, not to establish a philosophical view.

The text's author next argues against the idea that Buddha Nature can be correctly understood using either the concepts of existence/being (*yu*[e]) or nonexistence/nonbeing (*wu*[f]). Neither of these terms apply since neither existence nor nonexistence can be "transformed." "What is cannot be destroyed, what is not cannot be produced."[19] Buddha Nature is nothing fixed (*ting*[g]). If, the author argues, one says there is no (*wu*) Buddha Nature, then one would never be able to attain Buddhahood since both the ordinary person and the Buddha would be frozen into their own fixed natures. Likewise, if one wants to say that there is (*yu*) Buddha Nature, then the idea of the change or transformation inherent in Buddhist practice would be lost; one wouldn't practice Buddhism if one already in some fixed sense was Buddha (*yu*). It is precisely because Buddha Nature represents the *dynamic* of self-realization that both being and nonbeing must be rejected in speaking of it. Instead, the author speaks of Buddha Nature as existing aboriginally (*pen yu*[h]).

The author invariably links talk of the aboriginal existence of Buddha Nature with the realization of Buddhahood:

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17 See my "The Buddha Nature: True Self as Action," *Religious Studies* 20 (1984), 255-267, and "The Active Self: A Philosophical Study of the Buddha Nature Treatise and Other Chinese Buddhist Texts," (Ph.D dissertation, Temple University, 1981). My book, *Buddha Nature* (Albany, New York, 1990, forthcoming), will further discuss these issues.

18 *Buddha Nature Treatise*, 787a.

19 Ibid., 788c.

> In accordance with principle (*tao li*[i]), all sentient beings universally and aboriginally possess the pure Buddha Nature. That there should be one who eternally failed to obtain *parinirvāṇa* is not the case. This is why Buddha Nature most assuredly aboriginally exists; the reason is that it has nothing to do with either being or nonbeing.[20]

Thus Buddha Nature is not a static own-nature like an unchanging Hindu ātman precisely because an unchanging essence does not allow for the existential self-transformation which constitutes the practice and liberation of the Buddhist path.

One important component of the understanding of Buddha Nature as practice and realization is the identification of it with *āśrayaparāvṛtti/parivṛtti* (*chuan i*[j]). This is a Yogâcāra term literally meaning the "transformation of the basis" though it has a somewhat different usage in the *Buddha Nature Treatise*. *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* is introduced in the text as "the purity of the original nature," i.e., Buddha Nature.[21] In this text, then, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* has to do with two things: transformation and Buddha Nature. *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* is ascribed four characteristics, which I will present in abbreviated form:

> (1) The productive basis (*sheng i*[k]) is the continuing basis of the Buddha's nondiscriminative path .... Since there is reliance on this condition, we name this aspect the basis which produces the path (*tao sheng i*[l]).
> (2) The destructive basis (*mieh i*[m]) is the utter extinction and nonbirth of all delusions and habits due to their lack of basis [in reality].
> (3) The fruit of well-matured contemplation. Well and correctly penetrating [Thusness], showing reverence over a long period of time, and uninterruptedly and completely cultivating the Thusness that one knows, these are the fruits of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. If one is on the path, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is the cause. If one has completed the path, it is called 'fruit'.
> (4) The *dharmadhātu*'s characteristic of purity .... This is the extinction of the activities of the mind and the cutting off of the way of speech. It is ineffable because it is the attaining of the unattainable principle of Thusness (*chen-ju li*[n]).[22]

In the first characteristic, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is portrayed as the basis upon which the Buddha way is founded. Without it there would be no Buddhist path, no practice

20 Ibid., 788c.
21 Ibid., 801b.
22 Ibid., 801b.

of Buddhism. *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* as the destructive basis represents the negative aspect of Buddhist practice, the extinction of defilements which, in accordance with *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha Nature thought, means the realization of their ultimate unreality. *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* as the fruit of well-matured contemplation represents the positive aspect of Buddhist practice as realization, as the attainment of reverence and knowledge. It is not only both cause and fruit of Buddhist practice, but also engagement in the practice itself. Finally, the fourth characteristic shows *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as the culmination of Buddhist practice in the realization of Thusness. In sum, this text identifies Buddha Nature—via *āśrayaparāvṛtti*—as practice and realization.

Another passage confirms this reading. The author ascribes two general meanings to *āśrayaparāvṛtti*:

> The first is separation from desire; this is the [noble] truth of cessation. The second is the cause of separation from desire; this is the [noble] truth of path.[23]

Āśrayaparāvṛtti, then, encompasses the following: separation from desire, which is identified with the third noble truth; cessation (of suffering, i.e., realization, nirvana); and the cause of separation from desire, which is equated with the fourth noble truth, the Buddhist path. Here *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, a term explicative of Buddha Nature, is most directly identified with the Buddhist path and the attainments reached by treading that path.

Many other examples could be given but perhaps this suffices to show that Buddha Nature as conceived in the *Buddha Nature Treatise* is inseparably linked with ideas about Buddhist practice and the realization of enlightenment. This is important in itself for our understanding of Buddhist thought. It is also significant for the thesis of this essay. The *Buddha Nature Treatise* is clearly mystical in the sense that it affirms the idea of mystical experience and urges one to practice in such a way as to realize such experience: the central idea of the text, Buddha Nature, through its identity with Buddhist practice and the realization of Buddhahood, itself serves as a validation of Buddhist practice and realization.

The *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* is also a mystical text insofar as it strongly emphasizes that one can and should realize the truth of one's own enlightened nature. In this text the point is primarily conveyed through a discussion of the nonduality of ordinary persons and Buddha in the context of Buddhist practice. We can see the nonduality of ordinary persons and Buddha in the passage cited above from the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*, which should now be considered again. The *sattvadhātu*, the text says, is constituted by three conditions: (1) the *tathāgatagarbha* in its original, pristine state; (2) the *tathāgatagarbha* in its original, impure state of concealment by defilements; and (3) the *tathāgatagarbha* in its future state of universality, the completion and perfection of all things. These three condi-

23 Ibid., 801b.

tions, the text stresses, are nondually related on the basis of their Thusness. The Buddha says, "[These three] are all the *bhūtatathatā* (*chen shih ju*°); they are not different, not diverse."[24] In other words, though we distinguish between the *tathāgatagarbha* in defilement and in purity, ultimately this distinction is utterly lacking in reality.

This nondual relationship is clarified and linked with Buddhist practice in the following example, in which the text discusses the nature of the *dharmakāya*. The *dharmakāya*, when bound by defilements and "drifting on the waves of *saṃsāra*," is called "sentient beings." This same *dharmakāya*, when filled with repugnance for the suffering of *saṃsāra*, in putting aside all desires, practicing the ten perfections (*pāramitā*), embracing the 84,000 dharma gates (Buddhist teachings), and cultivating bodhisattva practices, is called "bodhisattva." Again, this very same *dharmakāya*, when free from all defilements and utterly pure, having arrived at "the place everyone wants to reach," and dwelling there on the other shore (*nirvāṇa*) is called "Tathāgata".[25] The passage culminates with the following words:

> The *dharmakāya* is there without separation from the *sattvadhātu*;[26] the *sattvadhātu* is there without separation from the *dharmakāya*. The *sattvadhātu* is the *dharmakāya*; the *dharmakāya* is the *sattvadhātu*.... Śāriputra, though the names of these two differ, their meaning is the same.[27]

The *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* conjoins ordinary persons and Buddha in such a way as to show the ontological nonduality of the two categories, but also so as to encourage Buddhist practice to effect the existential transformation of one into the other. Not only are we given the theoretical knowledge of the identity of our essential nature with that of the Buddha, we are empowered by the text to experientially realize that truth by taking on the bodhisattva practices. The ordinary person, the bodhisattva, and the Buddha are ontologically the same; they differ solely with regard to the extent and quality of their Buddhist practice. The text even goes so far as to describe *nirvāṇa* as the condition which "everyone wants to reach," affirming our universal desire as not only valid but one which we should energetically strive to attain. Thus this is also a mystical text insofar as it affirms the validity of the path which makes possible the realization of our desire, i.e., mystical experience.

The *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, by contrast, is not a mystical text. The primary basis for this judgment is the insistence of the text's author that understanding of

24 *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*, 467b.

25 Ibid., 467b.

26 *Sattvadhātu* means the "realm" or totality of sentient beings and/or the basic nature of sentient beings.

27 Ibid., 467b.

the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is unattainable by ordinary persons and is realized by Buddhas alone. The corollary of this view is that one is not urged in this text to cultivate meditational practices in order to attain the ultimate goal, but is instead urged to have faith in the Buddha's word and compassion. In short, this is devotionalism rather than mysticism. The *Supreme Basis Sūtra* emphasizes again and again the intrinsic incomprehensibility of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, the impossibility of understanding that the immaculate and perfect *tathāgatagarbha* could be the true nature of sullied imperfect human beings. For example, the Buddha says:

> Ānanda, why is the *tathāgatadhātu* [a synonym for *tathāgatagarbha*] incomprehensible? Ānanda, the *tathāgatadhātu* is in the midst of impurity; it is simultaneously both pure and impure. This condition cannot be comprehended.[28]

Given this incomprehensibility, only one remedy is possible: "All bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas can understand this teaching through faith in the Buddha's word."[29] Again, speaking of the supreme *bodhi*, or wisdom, the Buddha says:

> Ānanda, what are the singularities of the supreme *bodhi*? There are two kinds of singularity. The first is unknowability: no ordinary persons, śrāvakas, or pratyekabuddhas can penetrate it [the supreme *bodhi*]; it is not [within] their realm. The second is unattainability: with the sole exception of the Buddha, no one attains it.[30]

In short, the doctrine is incomprehensible. But where many a Buddhist text—and all mystical texts—would accept this and then go on to urge the reader to put aside the 'small mind' that prevents the comprehension of the incomprehensible and strive through meditation or other means to attain the liberating knowledge, this text tells the reader that since only the Buddha understands this teaching, one should turn with faith to him.

The major theme of the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* is this conjunction of doctrinal emphasis upon the incomprehensibility of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine with emphasis upon faith as the core of Buddhist practice. This is an interesting phenomenon. It is obvious that so-called mystical philosophy is notorious for its paradoxicality, its affront to sober reason. The author of the present text has chosen to focus upon this aspect of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine and then almost deliberately turns from the mystical attitude and insists repeatedly and forcefully upon the necessity of the faith attitude. It is quite a reasonable move: revelation (this sūtra spoken by the Buddha)

28 *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, 470c.

29 Ibid., 470c.

30 Ibid., 473a.

derives from a transcendent source which cannot be probed; hence one has no choice but to turn to that source in an act of faith. Even though in this case revelation teaches the ontological immanence of the sacred, a full grasp of the revelation itself transcends human ability and remains out of reach. In this way the mystical life is undercut at its foundations and cannot develop. In short, this text exhorts one towards devotionalism, not mysticism.

What a contrast this is with the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*, in which the emphasis is on the similarity between the ordinary person and the Buddha—here the emphasis is on distancing the two. Please notice that in theory the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* and the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* do not disagree. Both teach the immanence of the *tathāgatagarbha* concealed, in practice, from most of us by adventitious defilements. In this theory there is both a unifying of the supreme and the mundane (the *tathāgatagarbha* is here) and a distancing of the two (it is concealed from us, and in that sense not here). Thus, even though the point of *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha Nature thought generally seems to be the teaching of universal Buddhahood, an author can in fact choose to emphasize either the unifying or the distancing aspects of this teaching. The author of the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* seems to want to encourage people to practice Buddhism, including meditation, in order to free themselves. He stresses the unifying message of the teaching with its optimistic practice-encouraging qualities. (In fact, this sūtra—with its language of "the *sattvadhātu* is the *dharmakāya*; the *dharmakāya* is the *sattvadhātu*"—is, to my mind, the most optimistic among the *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha Nature scriptures.) The author of the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* clearly wants to encourage faith in the Buddha and devotional practices, including stūpa veneration; for this purpose the distancing aspect of the teaching is more useful. Moreover, by means of the device of emphasizing epistemological transcendence while denying ontological transcendence, the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* manages to show how it is that we need practice (inasmuch as we differ from the Buddha epistemologically) and yet are also capable of practice (inasmuch as we share the Tathāgata's nature).

The teaching of the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* is in line with the message of the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra* (from which it quotes, without attribution, several times). This latter text presents the same conjunction of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine with a religion of faith. The *Śrīmālādevī* points to the same issue of the incomprehensibility of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine to justify its urging of all to turn in faith to the Buddha.

> This *tathāgatagarbha* which is inherently pure is the inconceivable realm of the Tathāgata which has been contaminated by extrinsic defilements and other virulent defilements .... The fact that there is defilement in a mind which is inherently pure is difficult to comprehend. Only the Buddhas, the Lords, who have the eye of truth and the wisdom of truth, who are the

> sources of the Dharma and penetrate the Dharma, and who are the refuge of the true Dharma, can comprehend this truth.[31]

In the next chapter, Queen Śrīmālā goes on to say that the "good sons and daughters" of the Buddha are those who "develop their own wisdom of the most profound Dharma" but also those who

> revere the Lord though they do not completely understand the most profound Dharma. What is known only by the Buddhas is not our realm.[32]

The *Ratnagotravibhāga*, a text closely related to the *Buddha Nature Treatise*, likewise joins *tathāgatagarbha* concepts with faith and devotion.[33]

Takasaki Jikidō, probably the foremost scholar of *tathāgatagarbha* thought, goes so far as to say that "the core of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory is in its *ekayāna* theory, i.e., the 'pure' faith in the Buddha."[34] One of the reasons for the historical importance of the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* is its advocacy of the devotional practice of stūpa veneration. Takasaki believes the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* "may be the most developed expression of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory in its full and pure aspect" precisely because of its clear advocacy of faith in the practice of stūpa veneration.[35] Thus in his view devotionalism is normative for *tathāgatagarbha* thought. Moreover, scholars see the emergence of *tathāgatagarbha* thought as an important turning point which made possible the development of the devotional tradition in Buddhism, a tradition exemplified by the Pure Land school.[36] The *tathāgatagarbha* texts played this role by developing language and a perspective which could be used to extol the qualitative transcendence and supreme value of the Buddha and his 'merits.' Among the texts discussed in this essay, this is especially clear in the *Supreme Basis Sūtra.*

While it might be suggested that the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* should be understood as teaching a numinous or theistic type of mysticism, this possibility cannot be accepted. One scholar, in broaching the subject of the nature of mysticism, offers the following characterization: "Seen very broadly, mysticism is a name for our infinite appetities. Less broadly, it is the assurance that these appetites can be

31 Taishō #353, 12, 222b-c, translated by Diana Paul, "A Prolegomena to the Śrīmālādevī-Sūtra and the Tathāgatagarbha Theory: The Role of Women in Buddhism," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1974), 263-264. See also Alex & Hideko Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā: A Buddhist Scripture on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory* (New York, 1974).

32 Taishō 12, 222c. Paul, "Prolegomena," 270.

33 Taishō 1611, 31, 813-848. Translated by Takasaki, *A Study*.

34 Takasaki, "Anuttarāśrayasūtra," 744.

35 Ibid., 744.

36 Minoru Kiyota makes this point; see his "Tathāgatagarbha Thought: A Basis of Buddhist Devotionalism in East Asia," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 12 (1985), 221-228.

satisfied."[37] While it may in some cases (especially in Western religions) be inimical to mystical practice for a person to egotistically feel assured that her or his "infinite appetites" will be satisfied, it is true that any aspiring mystic must feel that those appetites can be satisfied. Except in cases of spontaneous mystical experience, in which no anticipation is present one way or the other, it seems fair to say that the very existence of a mystical path presupposes that the path may be successfully followed.

This element is conspicuously absent in the *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, which offers no path to knowledge for the seeker, but instead virtually urges the reader to forbear from seeking or from trying to understand the truth, since he or she cannot possibly succeed. Instead, a rather passive sort of faith is encouraged. Even in theistic mysticism, where it is taught as part of the doctrine that it is a matter of God's grace for a person to be brought into communion with God, one is urged to do what one can to prepare oneself for God's grace, or to make oneself more acceptable to God by emptying one's mind of all 'creaturely' things, doing charitable acts, and so forth. These are the initial stages of the mystical path in these traditions. In the present case, however, there *is* no path other than faith, and it is this more than anything else which renders this text nonmystical; access to knowledge is not proffered. Moreover, although according to this text one is dependent upon the Buddha for one's salvation, it is certainly not as if salvation here consists in attaining union or loving communion with the Buddha. Liberation consists in *bodhi* or wisdom (knowledge of the dharma, labeled in the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* as incomprehensible and attained only by the Buddha)—it is just that one is unable to develop that wisdom by one's own efforts. Thus the teaching of this text has no resemblance to a theistic type of mysticism. Neither is it an instance of any other kind of mysticism, inasmuch as the personal experience or knowledge which is needed for liberation is not presented as attainable.

My judgment that the *Supreme Basis Sūtra* does not represent a form of mysticism flies in the face of the apparently 'mystical' philosophy which it espouses, in common with the *Buddha Nature Treatise* and the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra*. These three texts share the basic teaching that all sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*, the pure principle of enlightenment. However, the texts part company when they relate this teaching to practice. The *Buddha Nature Treatise* and the *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* advocate personal experiential realization of this enlightenment principle; that is, according to the definitions used in this essay, they advocate mysticism. The *Supreme Basis Sūtra*, in contrast, points soberly to the incomprehensible paradoxicality of this teaching, and advocates a religion of faith and devotionalism. The *Buddha Nature Treatise*, however, points to the identical source of paradox but draws a very different conclusion. The *Buddha Nature Treatise* quotes the *Śrīmālādevī*: "World-Honored One, defilements do not have contact with the mind; the mind does not have contact

37 Geoffrey Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions* (New York, 1976), 7. Parrinder gives this as a quotation, but does not reveal its source.

with defilements. How can there be a defiled mind without such contact?" The *Buddha Nature Treatise*'s author then remarks: "Understanding this is called knowledge of the Principle of Thusness (*ju li chih*[p])."[38] The paradox of the defiled-pure mind does not deter him! He simply advocates penetration of the paradox.

This congruence of an apparently "mystical philosophy" with two radically opposed attitudes towards mystical experience clearly shows that there is no such thing as 'mystical philosophy' per se. Philosophy does not constitute mysticism. Mysticism is constituted first and foremost by mystical experience and derivatively by practices and lifestyles conducive to mystical experience, speeches and writing composed on the basis of and/or advocating mystical experience, and lives transformed by mystical experience. No matter what a given philosophy teaches, if it does not derive from and refer back to mystical experience, it cannot be considered mystical. This fundamental point should be remembered in scholarly studies of mysticism.

Chinese characters

a 佛說不增不減經
b 佛性論
c 釋日
d 佛說無上依經
e 有
f 無
g 定
h 本有
i 道理
j 轉依
k 生依
l 道生依
m 滅依
n 眞如理
o 眞實如
p 如 理 知

38 *Buddha Nature Treatise*, 802a.

T'ien-T'ai Chih-I's Theory of Buddha Nature—A Realistic and Humanistic Understanding of the Buddha

Heng-ching Shih

Among the three main Mahāyāna doctrinal traditions in Indian Buddhism—Mādhyamika, Yogâcāra, and Tathāgatagarbhavāda[1]—the Tathāgatagarbhavāda, which affirms the fundamental nature of enlightenment in sentient beings, had the greatest influence on Chinese Buddhism. Such important schools as the Hua-yen, T'ien-t'ai, Ch'an, and San-lun not only accept Buddha Nature as a basic tenet, but also consider it the ultimate teaching. But they did not simply parrot the Indian teaching on Buddha Nature; what makes the Chinese doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha Nature outstanding and unique is that Chinese Buddhists developed and reinterpreted it creatively.

A good example of such creative reinterpretation is the T'ien-t'ai doctrine that evil inherently exists in Buddha Nature. Traditionally, the nature of the Buddha represents absolute goodness and purity. The radical departure of the theory of inherent evil from this traditional view caused great controversy in China,

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1 Fa-tsang, the most important patriarch of the Hua-yen school, was the first to identify the Tathāgatagarbha as an independent school. See Minoru Kiyota, "Tathāgatagarbha Thought: A Basis of Buddhist Devotionalism in East Asia," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 12 (1985), 207-231.

and elicited criticism not only from other schools, such as Hua-yen,[2] but also from certain T'ien-t'ai Buddhists as well.

The theory of inherent evil or impurity in Buddha Nature was first taught by T'ien-t'ai Chih-i (538-597 CE) in his *Kuan-yin hsüan-i*[b] (*The Profound Meaning of the Sūtra on Kuan-Yin*).[3] He maintained that the *icchantika* is devoid of empirical good but endowed with the inherent nature of good, while the Buddha is devoid of empirical evil but replete with the inherent nature of evil. In Chih-i's holistic view of mind and reality, this view of Buddha Nature is a natural development from the basic T'ien-t'ai doctrine.

In this essay I will first look into the doctrinal sources of the theory of inherent evil which existed before Chih-i, with special reference to the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men*[c] (*Mahāyāna Method of Practicing Mental Quiescence and Insight*).[4] Then, in order to contextualize Chih-i's contribution to the doctrine of Buddha Nature, the second section will deal with the content and meaning of the theory in the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i*. A third section will deal with the place of Chih-i's theory of inherent evil in the broader structure of his thought; and the last section will discuss the problematic and significance of the theory.

The Source of the Theory of Inherent Evil in Buddha Nature

The *Ta ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* was attributed to the second patriarch of the T'ien-t'ai school, Hui-ssu (515-577 CE). It is one of the earliest T'ien-t'ai works which discusses the dual natures of purity and impurity of the *tathāgatagarbha*. It explains the *tathāgatagarbha* as follows:

> The *tathāgatagarbha* embraces the natures of all sentient beings, each of which differs from the others, thus constituting differences within what is without difference. Hence the natures of each and every one of these sentient beings, for all time, contain qualities that are immeasurable and boundless. This statement

2 For example, Tsu-juei, in his *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*[a] proclaimed that the theory of inherent evil was a heretical view which could cause one to fall into hell (*chüan* 16).

3 The authorship of this work has been questioned by some scholars. The issue is taken up later in the paper. Until further evidence establishes otherwise, we follow the tradition of acknowledging Chih-i as its author.

4 The authorship of this work also has been questioned. A Japanese T'ien-t'ai monk called Chen-chen[d], in his *T'ien-t'ai San-ta-pu Ssu-chi*[e] (*Personal Notes on the Three Great Works of T'ien-t'ai*) raises doubts concerning the authorship of the text. No matter who the author may have been, the thought presented in it clearly predates Chih-i and can be seen to be the main source of the theory of inherent evil.

> has reference to all impure things of the mundane worlds, such as the six modes [of existence], the four kinds of birth, suffering and happiness, beauty and ugliness, ignorance and wisdom; also to all the pure things that transcend the world, such as the causes and effects derived from the Three Vehicles. All these endlessly differentiated qualities are contained within the natures of each and every sentient being, all complete without the slightest diminution. For this reason the storehouse of the Tathāgata has originally, once and for all time, contained the two natures, the one impure and the other pure. Because of its impure nature it is capable of manifesting the impure things pertaining to all sentient beings. Hence the storehouse, being in this respect the dharmakāya as it lies within the barriers, is called Buddha Nature. But because it also contains the pure nature, it is capable of manifesting the pure attributes of all the Buddhas. Hence the storehouse, being in this respect the dharmakāya as it transcends the barriers, is also called naturally pure dharmakāya, or naturally pure nirvāṇa.[5]

Hui-ssu did not use the term "inherent evil" (*hsing-er*[f]) which is used by Chih-i. Rather, he used the term "inherent impurity" (*hsing-jan*[g]). Following the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition, the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* takes the *tathāgatagarbha* as possessing two aspects, the "empty *tathāgatagarbha*" and the "non-empty *tathāgatagarbha*." However, the meaning of the latter term in the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* is different from the traditional definition found in *tathāgatagarbha* texts such as the *Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*, and so forth. In the latter text the "non-empty *tathāgatagarbha*" refers to immeasurably undefiled and pure virtues, i.e., the *garbha* empty of all defilements. By contrast, the "non-empty *tathāgatagarbha*" in the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* includes both purity and impurity. This text describes the pure aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha*:

> Although this pure mind is equal and substantially undifferentiated, it is endowed with undefiled virtues as many as the sands of the Ganges. This is because the self-nature of the mind possesses great wisdom and light and is truly knowledgeable, eternal, blissful, autonomous, and pure. Immeasurable pure virtues like these are all one mind, as extensively elucidated in the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*. Because the pure mind embraces such pure dharmas, it is said to be non-empty.[6]

5 Taishō 46, 647c. The translation is taken, with some slight modifications, from Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy* (2 vols., Princeton, 1953), II.362.

6 Taishō 46, 646a.

There is little controversy over this pure aspect of the "non-empty *tathāgatagarbha*," since mind is consistently held to be positive in the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition. The defilements of the mind are held to be "adventitious" (*āgantuka*) and are in no sense inherent in or innate to the *garbha*. But the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* presents a new interpretation of this impure aspect of the "non-empty *tathāgatagarbha*." The impurity of the mind, it teaches, contains both the impure nature and impure things. According to the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men*, the impure nature of the mind has two functions: "to [karmically] produce life and death[h]" and "to make life and death.[i]"[7] The difference between these two functions lies in the meanings of the terms "produce" and "make." In the case of ordinary beings, the impure nature engenders actions and karmic retributions, resulting in the endless transmigrations of birth and death. This is what is meant by the impure nature being able to "produce life and death." In the case of the Buddhas, the impure nature can "make" the dharmakāya of a Buddha transmigrate in the five paths of existence for the sake of sentient beings. This is what is meant by the impure nature being able to "make life and death." This interpretation of impure nature laid the groundwork for Chih-i's theory of inherent evil.

Two reasons are given for the Buddhas' retention of the impure nature even after the achievement of Buddhahood. First, the nature, whether pure or impure, remains fundamentally immutable. Second, the impure nature provides a basis for activating and carrying out the compassionate actions of Buddha. The *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* explains the first reason as follows:

> *Question*: Regarding the fact that the storehouse of the Tathāgata embodies two kinds of nature, the one impure and the other pure, does this mean that these natures become formed as the result of habit, or do they remain forever unchangeable?
> *Answer*: These natures, both as substance and function, are [forever] unchangeable and are not formed as the result of habit. That it is why it is said that Buddha Nature, the great ruler, is not something created. How then can it be formed as the result of habit? And since Buddha Nature, that is the pure nature, cannot be created, this means that the impure nature, which is identical in substance even though it belongs to the world of physical things, likewise cannot be formed as the result of habit.[8]

This interpretation of the unchangeable substance of the mind is in line with the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition; however, it is in contrast with the doctrine of *anātman* (no-self) taught in early Buddhism. Although the doctrine of an innately pure mind, whether called *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha Nature, is problematic in Buddhist

7 Taishō 46, 646b.

8 Fung, *History*, II.379. The translation has been slightly amended.

hermeneutics, it does provide a positive and optimistic view of human potential for awakening.[9]

The *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* explains the second reason why the Buddhas retain the impure nature:

> *Question*: With the extinguishing of impure perfuming, the nature in its impure functioning no longer produces [the cycle of] life and death. Does this mean that after the achievement of Buddhahood the nature completely fails to function?
> *Answer*: This nature, not being perfumed by pollution, no longer produces [the cycle of] life and death. And yet, as long as mind is motivated, it [the nature], being perfumed by the compassionate wish [of the Buddhas to save all beings], may still act as an instrument for conversion.[10]

This passage spells out a very important reason for the existence of evil in the Buddha. The important point is that although the Buddha's nature can no longer be polluted the element of evil in it can act as an expedient instrument (*upāya*) for conversion.

As to the mind's embracing impure things, the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* states:

> The embracing of impure things by the essence of the mind means that this impure nature, being perfumed by impure deeds (*karma*), creates the condition of ignorance (*avidyā*) and the seeds of all impure things. In accordance with these seeds, various kinds of karmic retribution are manifested. This ignorance, together with these fruits of karma, constitute the things of impurity. This condition of ignorance, however, together with the karmic retributions induced by the seeds, although manifested in various forms that are spoken of as [phenomenal] things, nevertheless all have the single mind as their substance and do not lie outside this mind. This is the reason why the mind is not [really] 'empty.' The case is like that of the images reflected in a bright mirror. These have no substance other than the single mirror, yet this fact does not prevent them from being demarcated according to their differences, and since these differing images are all reflected in the mirror, the latter is therefore said not to be empty.[11]

9 One of the main arguments about the validity of *tathāgatagarbha* thought is whether it represents a form of monism or an expression of emptiness.

10 Fung, *History*, II.382. The translation has been slightly amended.

11 Ibid., II.365. The translation has been slightly amended.

The quotations given above present two important doctrines: (1) The mind is endowed with two innate natures, namely, purity and impurity; (2) The impure or pure nature of the mind is capable of manifesting its obverse, i.e., the pure or impure things pertaining to all sentient beings. Special attention should be paid here to the word "innate." Although it is sometimes said that the theory of *tathāgata-garbha* in *The Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* is dualistic, in fact the "one mind and two gates" schema of this text represents solely the innate purity of mind, and not that impurity which is described as adventitious or accidental. By contrast, the dual natures of purity and impurity in the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* are said to exist inherently in the mind.

In Chinese Buddhist terminology, "nature" (*hsing*[j]) is equivalent to *t'i*[k], the essence of a thing, and "thing" (*shih*[l]) is a phenomenon manifested as a result of the functioning of "nature." In other words, "potentiality becomes manifest as actuality." In the case of the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men*'s explanation of *tathāgata-garbha*, since it originally and for all time contains two natures, it is capable of manifesting both impurity and purity. As the "essence of mind of each and every sentient being and of each and every Buddha is originally composed of the two natures without the slightest distinction between them,"[12] the logical conclusion is that both sentient beings and the Buddha are capable of manifesting impure actions. However, the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* does not focus on the difference between the impure actions of sentient beings and the Buddha. It was Chih-i who took up this issue and gave it some theoretical clarity.

The Theory of Inherent Evil in the Kuan-yin hsüan-i

The *Kuan-yin hsüan-i* is Chih-i's commentary on the *Kuan-shih-yin pu-sa pu-men-pin*[m], the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*. He expounded the meaning of Kuan-yin (Avalokiteśvara) in ten aspects. It was in the explanation of the ninth aspect that Chih-i developed his theory of inherent evil in the Buddha. His explanation can be divided into four sets of questions and answers. The first set reads:

12 Taishō 46, 646c.

> *Question*: As the conditioned and revealing causes of Buddha Nature possess inherent good, do they also possess inherent evil?[13]
> *Answer*: They do.[14]

This question and answer assert a double aspect of Buddha Nature, which is based on the T'ien-t'ai philosophy of *hsing-chü*[o], "natural endowment," which indicates the possession of full potential and reality. Chih-li[p], an able disciple of Chih-i, said in his *Kuan-yin hsüan-i chi* (*The Commentary on the* Kuan-yin hsüan-i):

> Just the word "endowment" (*chü*[q]) can truly reflect the teaching of this [T'ien-t'ai] school, for all the other schools know the inherent good, but they cannot fathom the teaching of inherent evil.[15]

Strictly speaking, the *hsing-chü* philosophy is common to other schools that affirm Buddha Nature (*hsing-tsung*[r]) such as the Hua-yen, T'ien-t'ai, Ch'an, and so forth. However, although the concept of *hsing-chü* emphasizes absolute and perfect harmony among all differences and takes the mind as encompassing both good and evil, in the other schools it is not attributed to Buddhas. Since T'ien-t'ai's perfect teaching is concerned more with *chü*, or endowment, than with purity, it integrates evil and accepts its presence in Buddha Nature.

The second question and answer are:

> *Question*: What good and evil have the *icchantika* and the Buddha eradicated?
> *Answer*: For the *icchantika* all empirical good (*hsiu-shan*[s]) has been eradicated, but the innate nature of good exists, while for the Buddha all empirical evil (*hsiu-o*[t]) has been eradicated but the innate nature of evil exists.[16]

The *icchantika* is one who has severed the roots of virtue and does not engender the aspiration for enlightenment. This being the case, a controversy arose as to

13 According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* there are three causes of Buddha Nature: the basic cause, the conditioned cause, and the revealing cause. The basic cause refers to the *bhūta-tathatā* (*chen-ju*[n]) as the direct cause of attaining perfect awakening, which is associated with the dharmakāya. The other two function as activating causes, of which the revealing cause refers to *prajñā*, while the conditioned cause is an environmental cause, referring to the practice and merits which result in liberation. The conditioned cause can enhance the revealing cause which manifests the basic cause. When the basic cause is fully manifest, Buddhahood is attained.

14 Taishō 34, 882c.

15 Taishō 35, 905a.

16 Taishō 34, 882c.

whether the *icchantika* has Buddha Nature and will eventually become a Buddha. The key issue lies in the question of the innate existence of Buddha Nature or inherent good in the *icchantika*. All schools which affirm Buddha Nature teachings hold that innate Buddha Nature exists universally, and so the *icchantika* is eventually certain to become a Buddha. What then is the difference between a Buddha and an *icchantika*? Here Chih-i creatively reinterprets the issue through a distinction between "empirical good" and "empirical evil." He divides both good and evil (or, in the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men*'s terminology, purity and impurity) into inherent and experiential aspects. That is, inherent good and inherent evil are objective and ontologically existent, while empirical good and empirical evil are subjective and experientially existent. A Buddha who has attained perfection in compassion and wisdom is subjectively devoid of acquired impurity, but objectively possesses the innate nature of impurity. On the contrary, the *icchantika* who has engaged in nothing but impure activities is subjectively destitute of acquired good, but objectively endowed with the nature of purity.

The third question and answer are:

> *Question*: Why is it that inherent good or evil cannot be eradicated?
> *Answer*: The nature of good or evil is simply the entrance into the dharma consisting in good or evil. This nature cannot be changed. No one in the past, present, or future can destroy it, neither can it be eradicated. For example, even though a demon might burn up all the Buddhist scriptures, how could the activities of inherent good come to an end? Even though the Buddha might burn up all evils, how could the nature of evil come to an end? Consider another example: although Emperor Ch'in had burned books and buried Confucian scholars alive, how could he ever destroy the nature of good or evil?[17]

The theoretical basis for the ontological existence of inherent good and evil lies in the immutability of the basic nature of good and evil. Chih-i called this nature an "entrance into the dharma," indicating symbolically thereby that the Buddha enters dharma through the accomplishment of empirical good and the elimination of empirical evil, while the *icchantika* enters by the performance of empirical evil with an absence of empirical good. Although the entrance serves as both exit and entrance, it remains itself unchanged. Similarly, empirical good and evil serve as the entrances to the states of Buddhahood and *icchantika*, though the basic nature of good and evil remain essentially unchanged.

Since the Buddha has eradicated empirical evil and at the same time retains inherent evil, there is a question as to whether the Buddha's inherent evil will give rise to empirical evil. By the same token, although the *icchantika* has not created

17 Taishō 34, 882c.

empirical evil, he or she does possess inherent good. The question then is whether it is still possible for the *icchantika* to create empirical good. The fourth question and answer deals with this issue. It reads:

> *Question*: Can the *icchantika* whose nature of good is not eliminated still produce empirical good? Can the Buddha whose nature of evil is not eliminated still produce empirical evil?
> *Answer*: The *icchantika* does not comprehend the true nature of good. As a result, he is tainted by good and can produce empirical good to counteract all evils extensively. Although the Buddha does not eliminate inherent evil, he comprehends [the nature of] evil. As a result he can exercise mastery over evil and is not defiled by it. Furthermore, because his empirical evil never arises, the Buddha will never create evil again. Due to his control over evil, he can freely make use of evil in order to teach sentient beings. He utilizes evil all the time, and is never contaminated by it. Because he is not defiled, empirical evil does not arise. How can the *icchantika* be likened to the Buddha? If the *icchantika* comprehends [the true nature of] good and evil, he is no longer an *icchantika*.[18]

The statement that the *icchantika* whose nature of good is not eliminated can still produce empirical good may be examined from two points of view: first, why is a person an *icchantika*? And second, what is his potential for realizing Buddhahood? The answer that Chih-i gives to the first question is that the *icchantika* does not understand the true meaning of inherent good. Because of this it is said that he is "tainted by good", a statement which requires clarification. Here, "good" does not refer to inherent good, but rather to a kind of adventitious good that is only partially good. The *icchantika* does not understand that both inherent good and inherent evil are originally empty of self-nature; therefore, attachment to them arises. This attached good is said to be defiled or "tainted". Nevertheless, even the defiled good which he experiences, since it is inevitably imbued with undefiled inherent good, is capable of counteracting evil. When the *icchantika* overcomes evil with experienced good and realizes that the nature of good and evil are empty and unsubstantial, he will no longer be an *icchantika*. As to the *icchantika*'s possibility of realizing Buddhahood, it lies in the permanent and innate presence of inherent good which becomes activated when stimulated by favorable conditions. As long as the existence of universal Buddha Nature applies, the *icchantika*'s future realization of Buddhahood is guaranteed, although its actualization depends on various favorable circumstantial factors.

If the *icchantika* can produce empirical good from the inherent nature of good, can the Buddha similarly produce evil from the inherent nature of evil? The

18 Taishō 34, 882c.

answer is negative, and the reason is that even though retaining inherent evil, the Buddha will not commit empirical evil even when producing evil. The terminology differs here from that reported above on p. 154. Here, "committing empirical evil" means to engage personally in evil actions, something which the Buddha has already abandoned. "Producing evil" means to manifest empirical evil, which means that the Buddha's mastery over evil renders it possible to manifest (i.e., to produce) evil without being tainted by it. The manifestation of evil motivated by compassion on the part of the Buddha is necessary in order to teach and help sentient beings who are immersed in the defiled world.

As we can see, Chih-i takes the existence of inherent evil in Buddha Nature as the basis for the Buddha's compassionate activities. The theory of inherent evil is intended to bring the Buddha into touch with the real world of misery and suffering, that is, it is an attempt to humanize the Buddha without undermining his supreme qualities. At this point we may ask an important question: why is it necessary for the Buddha to possess inherent evil in order to carry out the work of benefitting sentient beings? Chih-i responded to this question in his *Kuan-yin hsüan-i*:

> According to other schools, the [mind of the] *icchantika* who is destitute of good is able to produce good because he or she is perfumed by the *ālayavijñāna*. The *ālayavijñāna* is neutral by nature and the basis both of all the seeds of ignorance and of good and evil. The *icchantika* has not eradicated ignorance but is able to produce good. The Buddha, who has eradicated ignorance, is not subject to perfuming [from the *ālayavijñāna*]; therefore for him evil does not arise. If the Buddha, then, wants to teach and transform sentient beings by means of evil, he has to manifest 'supernatural power with intention'.[19]

Here "the other schools" are the Northern Branch of the Ti-lun School[u] and the She-lun School[v]. They assert that the *ālayavijñāna* is the storehouse consciousness containing the seeds of all good and evil. Since the *ālayavijñāna* functions in this way for *icchantikas*, the seeds of empirical good can grow through the permeating influence of inherent good. On the other hand, since the *ālayavijñāna* has been transformed into *jñāna* (wisdom) in the case of the Buddha, the seeds of evil are completely eliminated. In other words, according to these schools the Buddha is free from defilement and abides in absolute purity. Although immune to evil, the Buddha can still perform the work of helping and saving living beings by utilizing empirically evil methods; to do this he has to manifest supernatural power "with intention". Such activity does not seem culpable to the Ti-lun or She-lun schools. However, Chih-i criticized this explanation:

19 Taishō 34, 882c.

> If evil is completely eliminated at the stage of Buddhahood, the Buddha has to elicit an intention in regard to evil in order to help sentient beings. This is as artificial as a man painting a picture. However, just as a mirror without motion can reflect images spontaneously, the inconceivable principle should be able to manifest evil. If the Buddha has to bring forth a conscious intention [in order to help sentient beings], how then is the Buddha different from a non-Buddhist?[20]

As this passage indicates, Chih-i does not question the explanation of the Buddha's ability to perform good deeds, although he is immune to inherent evil. His criticism focuses rather on the necessity of the Buddha's conscious intention in regard to evil in performing good deeds. In the *Fa-hua hsüan-i*[w] ("The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra"), Chih-i distinguishes three kinds of supernatural powers: (1) the intentional supernatural powers of the non-Buddhist; (2) the undefiled supernatural powers of the Hīnayāna; and (3) the ultimately true supernatural powers of the Mahāyāna.[21] The Buddha has the greatest supernatural powers. These differ from those of others in that thay are completely unintentional and effortless. According to the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*, the dharmakāya of the Buddha has absolute self-mastery or freedom in ten respects,[22] and the Buddha devotes himself in altruistic endeavours spontaneously and effortlessly. Vasubandhu explains the meaning of "effortless" by saying:

> Intention means making effort, responding to conditions pertaining to the three worlds, and having the thought that one has oneself done, is doing, or will do something. To have no such thought is to do things effortlessly.[23]

Only that supernatural power which is exercised unintentionally and effortlessly can be said to be masterful. According to T'ien-t'ai, in order to activate freely the self-mastering supernatural powers in response to living beings' needs, the nature of the Buddha must contain latent elements which correspond to those of living beings, which of course comprise both good and evil. Since the Buddha certainly has absolutely free and self-mastering supernatural power, the logical conclusion is that the elements of evil must necessarily be innate in the nature of the Buddha.

20 Taishō 34, 882c-883a.

21 Taishō 33, 692b.

22 The ten aspects of self-mastery are those regarding the mind, wealth, karma, birth, life, happiness, vows, knowledge, wisdom, and dharma. See Paul J. Griffiths et al., *The Realm of Awakening: A Study and Translation of Chapter Ten of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṅgraha* (New York, 1989), 77-81.

23 Taishō 31, 262a.

The Doctrinal Context for the Theory of Inherent Evil

The fundamental basis for the T'ien-t'ai theory of inherent evil is the absolute identity of contrasts which unifies and harmonizes all opposites or dualistic qualities. The theory of the complete harmony and identity of contrast or duality has its root in the principal T'ien-t'ai teachings: the "mutual encompassing of the realms[x]," the "hundred realms and thousand suchnesses[y]," the "three thousand worlds immanent in one moment of thought[z]," and the "three tracks[aa]."

For example, we may take the teaching of the three tracks to explain what the theory of the identity of opposites signifies in the so-called "exclusive perfect teaching of T'ien-t'ai." It is in the *Fa-hua hsüan-i* that Chih-i set forth the three tracks and explained their relationship:

> The three tracks are: (1) the track of true nature; (2) the track of contemplation and illumination; (3) the track of assistance. Although these are three in name, they are the Dharma of the Mahāyāna. These three are not three, for they can be taken holistically. Yet the one is also not one, for it can be taken as [distinctively] three.[24]

In the perfect teaching, the "track of true nature" refers to the substance of ultimate truth (*bhūtatathatā*). When this is fully revealed, the dharmakāya becomes manifest. The "track of contemplation and illumination" refers to ultimate emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the realization of which leads to *prajñā*. The "track of assistance" refers to the numerous virtues of the Tathāgata, the realization of which is liberation. The relation of these tracks is one in three and three in one. Taken separately, the "track of contemplation and illumination" and the "track of assistance" can be contracted; that is to say, only through the contracting force of the "track of assistance" can the "track of true nature" be realized. Thus it is said that *bodhi* without the impetus of *kleśa* cannot be true *bodhi*. Applying this theory to the contrasting conceptions of good and evil, Chih-i thus says in the *Fa-hua hsüan-i*:

> The mind of man encompasses the ten realms, which in turn innately comprise the nature and characteristics of good and evil. The nature and characteristics of evil are simply the nature and characteristics of good. From evil comes good; apart from evil

24 Taishō 33, 741b.

> good does not exist. To turn evil around good is accomplished.[25]

Chih-i thought that all defilements are nothing but the seeds of Buddhahood. The two are mutually identical and interpenetrating. At the stage of an ordinary person, evil functions as an assisting element, since "enlightenment is innately existent in evil." Objectively speaking, evil is illusory and subjectively speaking it is controllable. Evil does not obstruct the way, so *kleśa* is *bodhi.*

In the case of a Buddha, evil functions as a self-stimulating force, which becomes actual as the spontaneous flow of the Buddha's compassion. This concept of the identity of good and evil is closely connected with the T'ien-t'ai philosophy of the mind encompassing the ten realms. The ten realms of existence include those of the hells, hungry ghosts (*preta*), animals, *asuras*, human beings, gods, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. These ten realms are mutually immanent and inclusive. One realm comprises all the other nine realms, and in each realm the other nine are included. Each element of existence is present in every other. The realm of the Buddha also includes the elements and nature of the other nine realms. In other words, hell is not different from the Buddha-realm, and vice-versa.

When the theory of the identity of the ten realms is extended, it develops into the theory of "the hundred realms and thousand suchnesses," which states that every one of the ten realms involves the ten features of suchness.[26] Since each realm involves the other nine realms, there are one hundred realms possessing the ten features of suchness of each, bringing the number up to one thousand. Each realm further contains three distinct worlds: (1) the five *skandhas*; (2) all living beings; and (3) countries and plants, each again consisting of the ten features of suchness. Thus we arrive at a total of three thousand worlds.

What makes the T'ien-t'ai teaching unique is that it directly acknowledges the identity of the "three thousand dharmas which exist by nature from the very beginning" (*li-chü san-chien*[bb]) with the "three thousand dharmas which are created phenomena" (*shih-chü san-chien*[cc]). When the a priori (*li*[dd]) and the a posteriori (*shih*[ee]) are considered to be one and the same, and the three thousand dharmas are instantaneously immanent in one moment of thought, the perfectly harmonious T'ien-t'ai philosophy is established. The T'ien-t'ai considers its doctrine of perfect harmony and interpenetration superior to the doctrine of other schools which teach that "because of the reality [of Buddha Realm] one severs the other nine [realms]" (*yüan-li tuan-chiu*[ff]). This is because in these schools the a priori reality (*li*) of the Buddha realm leads to the severance of the other nine realms of existence. So these schools maintain that only the realm of the Buddha is a realm of absolute purity which thus transcends the other nine realms. The T'ien-t'ai school's critique of this

25 Taishō 33, 743c.

26 The ten features of suchness are: form, nature, substance, power, action, cause, condition, effect, reward, and harmony of the beginning and end.

position is that a Buddha in a world isolated from others is like a perfect person who is incapable of doing any evil. If such a person does evil it is only because he is forced to by evil people. By the same token, the Buddha in the teaching of *yüan-li tuan-chiu* possesses no other qualities than good. This being the case, when the Buddha manifests himself in the other nine realms, it is not out of spontaneity, but only when he is forced to do so by external conditions.

The *yüan-li tuan-chiu* theory stands in contrast to the holistic T'ien-t'ai view of mind and reality. This view is that "all things are interrelated in an endless dialectical matrix of relationship, i.e., all-in-one and one-in-all."[27] T'ien-t'ai accepts the presence of the Buddha in hell and the presence of hell (evil) in the Buddha, because any one realm is present in every other. In this teaching the Buddha retains his inherent evil, from which he manifests impure activities for the sole purpose of moving freely in the impure realms to save sentient beings. The T'ien-t'ai concept of the Buddha is based on a realistic humanism rather than on an idealistic concept of transcendence. Therefore, the theory of inherent evil in the Buddha is not as unorthodox as some other schools have maintained.

The Problematic and Significance of the Theory of Inherent Evil in the Buddha

Since the T'ien-t'ai theory of inherent evil in Buddha Nature is unique and radically different from the traditional concept of the nature of the Buddha, it engendered criticism both within the T'ien-t'ai School itself and from other schools. The most critical and systematic response comes from Fujaku Tokumon[gg], a Japanese Pure Land monk-scholar of the eighteenth century. In his *Shikyōgi-shūchū-senyō*[hh] (*Essence of the Collected Commentaries on the Ssu-chiao-yi*), Fujaku set forth his criticism in five points.[28]

First, Fujaku points out that the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of inherent evil goes against the widely accepted Mahāyāna doctrine of Buddha Nature and reality. He says that the Mahāyāna teachings are divided into the "temporal[ii]" and then "real[jj]." The teachings of Hua-yen, T'ien-t'ai, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, etc., belong to the "real teaching" which holds the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine to be the essence of Mahāyāna. The *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine teaches an innately pure mind, Buddha Nature, Buddha seed, etc., and maintains that all beings possess the pure Buddha Nature. According to the sūtras of the *tathāgatagarbha* corpus, the *tathāgatagarbha* represents the two aspects—emptiness and non-emptiness. The *tathāgatagarbha* is

27 See Whalen W. Lai, "The Pure and the Impure: The Mencian Problematik in Chinese Buddhism," in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. Whalen W. Lai and Lewis Lancaster (Berkeley, 1983), 299-326.

28 The following arguments are cited from the *Essence of the Collected Commentaries on the Ssu-chiao-yi*, 16-29.

empty in that it is originally pure and thus innately empty of impurity (evil), and it is innately non-empty in that it is intrinsically endowed with immeasurable virtues. Since the *tathāgatagarbha* is totally pure, evil has no independent or permanent place in either human or Buddha Nature. Exalting the teaching of the pure mind in *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as the ultimate reality, Fujaku thus refutes the doctrine of inherent evil.

Second, as understood by Fujaku, the doctrine of inherent evil also contradicts the T'ien-t'ai teaching of "mutual interpenetration of the ten realms." He reasons that the nine realms belong to the "temporal" and that only the realm of the Buddha is "real." As such, the real meaning of the teaching of mutual interpenetration is to reveal that only the realm of the Buddha is true reality, while the other nine realms, arising from ignorance, are devoid of true nature. To prove his point, Fujaku quotes Chih-i's *Ma-ho chih-kuan*: "There is neither good nor evil in the great emptiness of Dharma Nature. It is due to people's delusions that they see good and evil." Thus, he asserts that the theory of inherent evil cannot be Chih-i's thought.

Third, Fujaku enumerates six points to challenge the authenticity of the theory of inherent evil. (1) The theory of inherent evil in Buddha Nature fundamentally contradicts the Mahāyāna teachings in general and the teaching of the T'ien-t'ai school in particular as explained above. (2) If the theory of inherent evil were the ultimate and most unique teaching of Chih-i, then it would have been elucidated in the most appropriate sections of his masterpieces, such as the section on the "wonder of the realm of the phenomenal" in the *Fa-hua hsüan-i*, the "ten features of suchness" in the *Fa-hua wen-chü*[kk], the "Chapter of the Buddha Way" in the commentary on the *Vimalakīrtisūtra*, etc. The fact that none of Chih-i's major works explicitly mentions this theory proves that it was attributed to him rather than being his own idea. (3) Fujaku points out that the works of Chih-i, either written by him or recorded by his disciple Chang-an, are excellent both in language and thought, yet the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i*, especially the section on inherent evil, is poor in literary style and content. (4) The *Kuan-yin hsüan-i* quotes passages on the Buddha's power of universal manifestation from various sūtras, using them as scriptural authority to certify the necessary existence of inherent evil in the Buddha. However, Fujaku argues that the Buddhas or bodhisattvas who manifest themselves in response to the needs of sentient beings do so not through the working of inherent evil, but rather out of the virtuous functioning of their great wisdom and compassion. Therefore, the existence of innate evil in the Buddha cannot be justified in this way. (5) Chih-i's *Kuan-yin hsüan-i* and *Fa-hua hsüan-i* contradict one another in their definitions of the conditioned and revealing causes of Buddha Nature. The former defines the conditioned and revealing causes as evil by nature, while the latter defines the revealing cause as *prajñā* and the conditioned cause as myriad virtues, both being good by nature. (6) Fujaku mentions that Chih-i critically refuted heretical doctrines concerning the concept of substantial nature, yet the theory of inherent evil is similar to the Sāṅkhya concept of Ātman. According to Fujaku, all of these six points prove that the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i* is not Chih-i's work and that he did not posit the theory.

Fourth, Fujaku quotes from the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* which mentions four misconceptions about the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*. One of these is to hold that evil or impurity innately exist in the *tathāgatagarbha*. This concept is incorrect because impurity is taken as a substantial reality, while in actuality impurity is merely an illusion. Thus the theory of inherent evil is a deviant view which needs to be refuted.

Fifth, Fujaku criticizes the theory of inherent evil in the Buddha as being anti-ethical. Although he acknowledges that people like Tsin-hsi[ll] and Ssu-ming[mm] who promoted this theory in order to elevate the T'ien-t'ai teaching to a superior position over other schools were not themselves morally affected by this theory, he charges that it may produce ill effects on later generations, for people could erroneously employ the theory to defend their misconduct.

Examining Fujaku's refutation of the theory of inherent evil, we find that most of his arguments are not above criticism. For example, Fujaku questions the authorship of the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i*. Despite his questionable arguments, even if the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i* were not Chih-i's work, this cannot be used as a reason to invalidate the theory itself. In other words, the authorship of the *Kuan-yin hsüan-i* and the theory contained in it are two different issues. Another weak argument is Fujaku's attack upon the theory based on his understanding of traditional *tathāgatagarbha* thought, for T'ien-t'ai postulates the doctrine of evil within Buddha Nature in full awareness that it differs from traditional *tathāgatagarbha* thought.

Although some of Fujaku's criticisms are not convincing, he does raise two important points. (1) The Buddha's universal manifestations in the nine realms are not activated by inherent evil but by the spontaneous virtuous functioning of the Buddha as Dharmakāya. (2) The theory of inherent evil in Buddha Nature could lead to unethical behavior.

Summary

Doctrinally, the theory of inherent evil is at the pinnacle of the T'ien-t'ai philosophy of perfect harmony and identity in which all realities penetrate one another, each contained in each, and all opposites are identified and harmonized. A theory such as this naturally erases all dichotomies such as good and evil, *kleśa* and *nirvāṇa*, Buddha and sentient beings, and so forth. In this holistic view, evil, no less than good, is an integral part of the Buddha. Most significantly, from the perspective of the *icchantika* the theory implies inherent good within all beings, for if evil is an integral part of the Buddha good must similarly be an integral part of the *icchantika*. Therefore, the theory affirms the *icchantika*'s Buddhahood and Buddha's humanity.

From the religious point of view the theory signifies the interrelatedness of life and points to an inner dynamic of Buddhahood. The element of evil in the Buddha generates feelings of compassion to view all fellow beings sympathetically, since he and they have an identical human nature. In the *Vimalakīrtisūtra* the

Buddha says: "Because sentient beings are sick, I am also sick." We may assume that, motivated similarly by compassion, the Buddha manifests evil in order to relate to the nature of sentient beings who commit evil. In this theory of realistic humanism, a bridge is thus built between the Buddha and all sentient beings.

Chinese Characters

a 起信論疏筆削記
b 觀音玄義
c 大乘止觀法門
d 證真
e 天台三大部私記
f 性惡
g 性染
h 能生生死
i 能作生死
j 性
k 體
l 事
m 觀世音菩薩普門品
n 真如
o 性具
p 知禮
q 具
r 性宗
s 修善
t 修惡
u 地論宗
v 攝論宗
w 法華玄義
x 十界互具
y 百界千如
z 一念三千
aa 三軌
bb 理具三千
cc 事具三千
dd 理
ee 事
ff 緣理斷九
gg 普寂
hh 四教儀集註詮要
ii 權
jj 實
kk 法華文句
ll 荊溪
mm 四明

T'ien-t'ai Chih-i's Concept of Threefold Buddha Nature—A Synergy of Reality, Wisdom, and Practice

Paul L. Swanson

The idea of Buddha Nature, that all beings have the innate potential to become Buddhas, was an important topic of debate in later T'ien-t'ai thought, and led to some fascinating speculations. Prominent among these was Chan-jan's[a] (711-782) advocacy of Buddha Nature in all things, even in inanimate objects such as plants, trees, rocks and mountains, an idea which came to dominate Chinese and Japanese Buddhism.[1] Unlike later T'ien-t'ai thought, however, it would appear that the term "Buddha Nature" itself is not prominent in the writings of Chih-i, the founder of T'ien-t'ai philosophy.[2] It is not a topic dealt with explicitly at any length in his major works such as the *Fa-hua hsüan-i* or *Mo-ho chih-kuan*. Much as the three-

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1 See especially his *Chin kang pei*[b], Taishō 46, 781-786. See also the essay by Heng-ching Shih in this volume.

2 For a quite different opinion, see Yu-kwan Ng's "Chih-i and Mādhyamika," Ph.D dissertation, McMaster University. Ng argues that what he calls "Middle Way-Buddha Nature" is the central concept in Chih-i's philosophy. There are some Japanese scholars who argue, on the other hand, that much of the material on Buddha Nature attributed to Chih-i is later, attributable especially to Chih-i's disciple Kuan-ting in response to the competition from San-lun scholarship. See Hakamaya Noriaki, *Hongaku shisō hihan* (Tokyo, 1989), especially 16-20. For textual studies showing the later accretions to Chih-i's work, especially in the *Fa-hua wen-chü*, see Hirai Shun'ei, *Hokke mongu no seiritsu ni kansuru kenkyū*.

fold truth (emptiness, conventional existence, and the Middle) provides the structure and basic pattern for Chih'i's massive system of Buddhist practice and philosophy without being expressly treated at any length, Buddha Nature is not so much explained as assumed.[3] And yet, like the threefold truth, it is an important concept in Chih-i's T'ien-t'ai philosophy and practice in the sense that Buddha Nature is synonymous with the *ekayāna* principle of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the highest expression of the Buddha dharma. The concept of Buddha Nature, in this sense, is part of the assumed structure of Chih-i's T'ien-t'ai Buddhism.

The question then is, what does Buddha Nature mean and what is its significance for the theory and practice of the Buddha dharma? I intend to show that for Chih-i Buddha Nature is not a static entity but an active threefold process which involves the way reality is, the wisdom to see reality as it is, and the practice required to attain this wisdom. Buddha Nature is threefold: the three aspects of reality, wisdom, and practice are interdependent—one aspect does not make any sense without the others. In other words, the three aspect of reality, wisdom, and practice must be taken as a synergistic whole; they support each other and cannot be meaningful on their own. The "way things are" is realized (and Buddhahood achieved) through the attainment of wisdom, by following certain practices.

One of the few explicit discussions of Buddha Nature by Chih-i, and one that fits into the basic structure of his philosophy as a whole, is his formulation of the threefold Buddha Nature in the *Fa-hua hsüan-i*. Even this explanation is only a short part of a longer section on "threefold reality".[4] The concept of threefold Buddha Nature is thus part of a general pattern in which various Buddhist concepts—*vijñāna, prajñā, trikāya, triratna*, and so forth—are interpreted in a threefold pattern: the synergy of reality, wisdom, and practice. I will thus discuss Chih-i's concept of the threefold Buddha Nature in the context of this threefold pattern of reality, wisdom, and practice.

Threefold Reality Illustrated in Ten Categories

At the risk of straying too far from the subject of Buddha Nature, I will first present the ten Buddhist themes which Chih-i interprets in a threefold manner. It is within this context that Chih-i presents his idea of threefold Buddha Nature, and in order to understand Chih-i's threefold Buddha Nature it is useful to see how this pattern is applied on an extended level.

Chih'i's discussion of this threefold pattern begins with what he calls the three (or threefold) "tracks"[c]. Chih-i uses the term "tracks" because these are the

3 On the threefold truth see my *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism* (Berkeley, 1989).

4 Taishō 33, 741b-746c.

three aspects of the way things are; in a sense reality is "set" in a certain pattern. This basic pattern is illustrated through a discussion of ten Buddhist concepts, all of which are interpreted in terms of both their unity and diversity.[5]

The three "tracks" are: (1) the true nature[d] of reality, i.e., the way things are whether or not one is aware or awakened to it; (2) the wisdom, or "illumination through insight"[e], which destroys one's delusions and through which the true nature of reality is revealed; and (3) one's inherent disposition[f] or potential (and, implicitly, the practices necessary) to realize this wisdom.

Note that Chih-i emphasizes both the unity and diversity of these elements. As Chih-i is wont to say, they are three in one, one yet three. In technical T'ien-t'ai terminology:

> There is only one Buddha vehicle. This single Buddha vehicle involves a threefold reality. This is also called the truth of supreme meaning, the supreme meaning of emptiness, and the *tathāgatagarbha*. These three [aspects] are not a fixed three; there are three yet they are one. The one is not a fixed one; there is one yet it is three. This is beyond conceptual understanding; these are neither in a straight row [the same] nor distinct, like the [Sanskrit] letter ∴ or the eyes of *Īśvara* (इ).[6]

Chih-i then quotes the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* that "Buddha Nature is ... both one and not one, neither one nor not one."[7] He explains that Buddha Nature is "one" because "all sentient beings [participate in] the single vehicle (*ekayāna*; i.e., all sentient beings are destined to eventually attain Buddhahood), and this expresses the truth of supreme meaning (*paramārthasatya*)."[8] For Buddha Nature to be "not one" means that "there are numerous dharmas (i.e., the diversity of provisional reality); this expresses *tathāgatagarbha*."[9] Buddha Nature is "neither one nor not

5 Taishō 33, 741b11.

6 Taishō 33, 741b13-17. These images are often used by Chih-i to illustrate the unity and diversity of the three-in-one, one-yet-three formulation. The Sanskrit vowel 'i' and the three eyes of Īśvara are arranged in such a way, like a triangle, that they illustrate how three elements can be taken as a single unit. The three eyes of Īśvara, for example, with two eyes lined up as in the ordinary human face and one extra eye in the middle of the forehead, can be taken as a single unity (unity), yet as three eyes (diversity). The two analogies are from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (Taishō 12, 616b11-17).

7 Taishō 12, 770b20-25. The full quotation from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* is: "Good sons, Buddha Nature is both *rūpa* and not *rūpa*, neither *rūpa* nor not *rūpa*. It both has marks and does not have marks, neither has marks nor does not have marks. It is both one and not one, neither one nor not one. It is not eternal nor is it cut off; it is neither noneternal nor not cut off. It is both existent and nonexistent; it is neither existent nor nonexistent. It is both perishing and nonperishing; it is neither perishing nor nonperishing. It has both cause and effect; it has neither cause nor effect. It has meaning and no meaning; it neither has meaning nor no meaning. It is both verbal and nonverbal; it is neither verbal nor nonverbal."

8 Taishō 33, 741b18-19.

9 Taishō 33, 741b19-20.

one"; it is neither a fixed unity nor a fixed diversity; there is one reality with three "names."[10] It is not that there are three "realities," but that there are three aspects to the way things are. This threefold pattern, and the three-in-one yet one-as-three motif, is related to Chih-i's concept of the threefold truth, and also holds true for the remaining threefold categories (for which refer to the chart on page 176).

What then are these ten categories of threefold reality and their content? Chih-i lists them, and gives the reasons for their choice and order, as follows:

> (1) The threefold path of cyclic saṃsāra is the basic dharma, therefore it comes first. If one wishes to reverse the flow of saṃsāra, one should understand (2) threefold consciousness, know (3) threefold Buddha Nature, awaken (4) threefold wisdom, arouse (5) threefold *bodhi*-mind, practice (6) the threefold Mahāyāna, illumine (7) the threefold body (*trikāya*), and perfect/attain (8) threefold nirvāṇa. (9) The three jewels (*triratna*—Dharma, Buddha, Saṅgha) benefit all [beings] and when their [task of] transforming and leading [others] is exhausted, they will enter (10) the threefold virtue/reward and dwell in the secret storehouse [of Buddhahood].[11]

The "threefold path," the first of the ten sets of three, refers to the cycle of saṃsāra as suffering, passions, and karma. There is suffering (the way things are), which leads to passionate attachment and delusion (the opposite of wisdom), which in turn leads to karmic activity, leading again to further suffering in an endless cycle. This is the human condition. The themes which follow consist of those matters which need to be realized or perfected in order to overcome this human condition and attain the perfection of a Buddha.

The second of set of three is threefold consciousness: *amala-vijñāna*, *ālaya-vijñāna*, *ādāna-vijñāna*, the threefold consciousness beyond the five senses, and ordinary consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*). At this point, Chih-i relies upon the "nine *vijñāna*" theory of the She-lun school rather than the traditional "eight *vijñāna*" theory of the Ti-lun school.[12] *Amala-vijñāna*, pure or undefiled consciousness, corresponds to the aspect of "true nature," *ālaya-vijñāna*, the "store" consciousness, corresponds to the aspect of wisdom, and *ādāna-vijñāna*, which holds the "seeds" for both defilement and enlightenment, corresponds to the aspect of practice or

10 Taishō 33, 741b20-22.

11 Taishō 33, 744a24-28.

12 Chih-i is aware of the fact that there are various interpretations of these "upper levels" of consciousness. See the *Fa-hua hsüan-i* [Taishō 33, 744b-c] and his commentary on the *Vimalakīrtisūtra* [Taishō 38, 553a]. This is a very complicated subject which cannot be dealt with in this paper. For a good summary see Stanley Weinstein, "The Concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* in Pre-T'ang Chinese Buddhism," in *Yūki kyōju shōju kinen: bukkyō shisōshi ronshū* (Tokyo, 1964), 33-50.

activity.[13] Chih-i takes pains to point out, however, that these "three" are actually aspects of a single consciousness; these *vijñāna* are three in one, one yet three, as explained above.

The third of the sets of three is threefold Buddha Nature; this is explained in the next section

The fourth of the sets of three is threefold *prajñā* wisdom: the "real aspects" of *prajñā* refer to "all things" (*sarvadharma*) as correctly perceived through *prajñā* wisdom: *prajñā* illuminated through insight/contemplation refers to the wisdom itself which illuminates reality as it is; "verbal" *prajñā* refers to the texts and verbal expressions of *prajñā*, as well as other upāyic expressions of *prajñā*.[14]

The fifth of the sets of three is threefold *bodhi*-wisdom: the "real aspects" of *bodhi* refer to reality as correctly perceived through *bodhi*-wisdom; *bodhi* as "real wisdom" refers to the wisdom itself which perceives reality as it is; *bodhi* as skilful means (*upāya*) refers to activity and working out of *bodhi*-wisdom in the mundane world, such as Śākyamuni's career and attainment of *samyaksaṃbodhi*.[15]

The sixth of the sets of three is threefold Mahāyāna ["great vehicle"]: the vehicle as reality (*tathatā*); the vehicle in accordance with wisdom; the vehicle as attainment, i.e., practice as the vehicle for attaining wisdom. In more technical terms, and with reference to a passage from the *Lotus Sūtra*,[16] the three aspects of reality refer to the "vehicle as reality", the great vehicle on which the Buddha himself dwells; the "vehicle in accordance", that adorned with samādhi and wisdom; and the "vehicle of attainment", the dharmas which are attained through practice.[17]

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13 It is interesting to note that Chih-i was familiar with but did not make much of these Yogâcāra concepts. In fact, he seems to have considered the Yogâcāra tradition, or at least the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*, to be inadequate since it was (as far as he knew) too academic and did not teach the concrete practices needed to attain the fine state of Buddhahood expounded in the text. He once compared the teachings of the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*, especially the sections detailing the qualities of a Buddha, to a poor man counting his master's treasure. See *Fa-hua hsüan-i*, Taishō 33, 704c13.

14 Taishō 33, 744c27-745a4. This classification is based on a gloss found in the *Ta chih tu lun* (Taishō 44, 669a-c).

15 Taishō 33, 745a14-17. This classification seems to be based on a passage in the *Sad-dharmapuṇḍarīkasūtropadeśa* which presents three kinds of "Buddha-*bodhi*" based on the *trikāya* theory. See Taishō 26, 9b11-19.

16 See Taishō 9, 8a23-24. Leon Hurvitz translates: "the Buddha himself dwells in the Greater Vehicle; whatever dharmas he acquires, adorned with the strength of concentration and wisdom ...," *The Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York, 1976), 34.

17 Taishō 33, 745a26-28. This terminology seems to be borrowed from a threefold classification of Mahāyāna in the *Mahāyānasaṅgrahabhāṣya*, Vasubandhu's commentary to the *Mahāyānasaṅgraha* as translated by Paramārtha. See Taishō 31, 234c21-24.

CHIH-I'S ANALYSIS OF THREEFOLD REALITY

basic pattern	reality 理	wisdom 智	行 practice 願
"tracks" 三軌	true nature itself 眞性軌	the wisdom which illumines the true nature 觀照軌	practice which perfects inherent disposition for wisdom 資成軌
threefold truth 三諦	middle 中	emptiness 空	conventional existence 假
1. cyclic path 三道	path of suffering 苦道	path of passions 煩悩道	path of karma 業道
2. consciousness (*vijñāna*) 三識	*amala-vijñāna* 菴摩羅識	*ālaya-vijñāna* 阿黎耶識	*ādāna-vijñāna* 阿陀那識
3. Buddha Nature 三佛性	direct cause of Buddhahood 正因性	complete cause of Buddhahood 了因性	conditional causes of Buddhahood 縁因性
4. *prajñā* 三般若	the real aspects of *prajñā* 實相	*prajñā* illuminated through insight-contemplation 觀照	verbal *prajñā* 文字
5. *bodhi*-wisdom 三菩提	the real aspects of *bodhi* 實相	*bodhi* as real wisdom 實智	*bodhi* as skilful means (*upāya*) 方便
6. Mahāyāna 三大乘	the vehicle as reality 理乘	the vehicle in accordance with [wisdom] 隨乘	the vehicle as attainment 得乘
7. *trikāya* 三身	*dharmakāya* 法身	*saṃbhogakāya* 報身	*nirmāṇakāya* 應身
8. nirvāṇa 三涅槃	nirvāṇa as pure by nature 性浄	nirvāṇa as perfect-complete unity 圓浄	nirvāṇa as pure in skilful means 方便
9. *triratna* 三寶	Dharma 法	Buddha 佛	Saṅgha 僧
10. virtues/rewards 三徳	dharmakāya 法身	*prajñā*-wisdom 般若	liberation 解脱

The seventh of the sets of three is the threefold body (*trikāya*) of the Buddha: the *dharmakāya*—body of dharma; the *saṃbhogakāya*—reward body, the wisdom of a Buddha as a reward for the practice of a bodhisattva; and *nirmāṇakāya*—transformation body, the appearance activity of a Buddha in this world.

The eighth of the sets of three is threefold nirvāṇa: nirvāṇa as pure by nature, i.e., "the nature of reality", i.e., nirvāṇa as the complete and perfect result of perfecting wisdom and Buddhahood; and nirvāṇa as pure in skilful means, i.e., the attainment of nirvāṇa while still being active (though undefiled) to save other beings in this world, as "when firewood has been exhausted and the fire extinguished."[18]

The ninth of the sets of three is the three jewels (*triratna*): the Dharma, reality as it is; the Buddha, or those who have attained wisdom; and the Saṅgha, the assembly of those who practice the Buddhist path.

The tenth and last of the sets of three is threefold virtue, the reward which accompanies the attainment of Buddhahood: dharmakāya, *prajñā*-wisdom, and liberation.[19] Once again, dharmakāya refers to reality as it is; *prajñā* to the wisdom which correctly perceives this reality; and liberation to the attainment of this wisdom.

Threefold Buddha Nature

Threefold Buddha Nature consists of: (1) Buddha Nature as the direct cause of attaining Buddhahood, which corresponds to the aspect of "true nature"; (2) Buddha Nature as the complete cause of attaining Buddhahood, which corresponds to the aspect of wisdom; and (3) Buddha Nature as the conditional causes of attaining Buddhahood, which corresponds to the aspect of practice.

Buddha Nature as direct cause refers to the innate potential in all sentient beings to become a Buddha;[20] Chih-i illustrates this aspect of Buddha Nature by quoting the passage from the *Lotus Sūtra* in which the rich father announces to everyone the true nature of his "lost" son: "You are truly my son; I am truly your father."[21] This passage illustrates the aspect of Buddha Nature as reality. Since all beings have within them the potential to become a Buddha, this is the "direct cause" for attaining Buddhahood.

The other two aspects of Buddha Nature are illustrated by a quotation from the parable of the priceless jewel sewn into the friend's garment: "I, from the past,

18 Taishō 33, 745b27-c2.

19 Based on a passage in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. See Taishō 12, 616b11-17.

20 Taishō 744b12-13.

21 See the parable of the lost son in the *Lotus Sūtra*, Taishō 9, 17b13-14. See Hurvitz, *Scripture*, 88.

have taught you the supreme path, therefore ... the vow [to attain] all wisdom persists without being lost."[22] Chih-i takes the word "wisdom" in this proof-text to illustrate Buddha Nature as the complete cause, i.e., the wisdom which illumines the true nature of reality, and the word "vow" to illustrate Buddha Nature as conditional causes, i.e., the practices necessary to attain wisdom.

Chih-i quotes further from the *Lotus Sūtra* to illustrate the threefold Buddha Nature: the pronouncement of the Bodhisattva Never-Disparaging that "I do not hold [any of] you in contempt, because all of you will become Buddhas" is said to illustrate Buddha Nature as the direct cause of Buddhahood, i.e., that everyone has within them the innate potential to become a Buddha. The four assemblies of monks and lay people, who at first mocked the Bodhisattva Never-Disparaging, later reformed their ways and chanted the sūtras and so forth, and so attained the Buddha's wisdom. This illustrates Buddha Nature as complete cause. The various virtues and rewards gained by these figures illustrate Buddha Nature as conditional causes.[23]

This threefold classification and the terms Chih-i uses are traditionally attributed to passages from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.[24] The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, however, speaks of a twofold Buddha Nature, and the inspiration for a threefold pattern seems to come from Chih-i himself. A passage on Buddha Nature in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* says:

> World Honored One! As the Buddha explains, there are two types of causes, [direct] causes and conditional causes. Which [kind of] cause is the Buddha Nature of sentient beings?
>
> Good sons! There are also two types of causes for the Buddha Nature of sentient beings. The first is correct [direct] causes and the second is conditional causes. "Correct causes"[g] refers to all sentient beings [themselves], and "conditional causes"[h] refers to [the practice of] the six perfections.[25]

At this point we have only two of the three parts of Chih-i's threefold Buddha Nature. Later on in the same passage of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, however, we find that "conditional causes" are equated with "complete causes"[i].[26] Here, the three individual terms are found in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, but the threefold structure and explanation of these terms is original with Chih-i.

22 The second half of this phrase corresponds to Taishō 9, 29a18-19. Hurvitz translates, "though the vow concerning All-Knowledge, still there, had never lost its effect" (*Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 165).

23 *Lotus Sūtra*, Taishō 9, 50c-51b; ibid., 280-282.

24 See, for example, Taishō 12, 775-776.

25 Taishō 12, 775b26-29.

26 Taishō 12, 776b4.

What, then, is Chih-i's intention in proposing a threefold Buddha Nature? Some of his illustrations seem rather imaginative, but his intent is clear. He is concerned to identify Buddha Nature with the *ekayāna* principle of the *Lotus Sūtra*, that all sentient beings are destined to attain Buddhahood. Buddha Nature is seen to have three aspects: first, the way things are, i.e., the innate potential in all beings to attain Buddhahood, whether it is realized or not; second, the wisdom which is the content of the Buddha's enlightenment and the goal of practice; and third, the practices or activity required to realize this wisdom. Buddha Nature is not a static entity but an active process—a synergistic trinity of reality, wisdom, and practice.[27] Otherwise, Buddha Nature reverts to being a kind of substantial ātman, an idea which is antithetical to the very foundations of Buddhist thought.

Further, these three aspects of Buddha Nature are dependent on each other; they have no meaning on their own. There is no independent "potential" for Buddhahood or wisdom without practice; practice has no meaning without the promise of attaining Buddhahood. The potential is there, but it must be realized. They are three in one, one yet three.

Conclusion

We have seen how Chih-i presented his concept of a threefold Buddha Nature in the context of interpreting a number of traditional Buddhist concepts in terms of threefold dharmas. The basic threefold pattern—reality, wisdom, practice—and the synergistic relationship that obtains among them is, in a sense, a way to avoid a simplistic treatment of the question whether Buddha Nature "exists" or "does not exist." To Chih-i, Buddha Nature, synonymous with the *ekayāna* principle of the promise of Buddhahood for all beings, is not a static entity, and yet one cannot say that it does not exist. Buddha Nature is part of a larger world of experience which includes the other threefold dharmas and involves three aspects: the way things are, the wisdom to perceive them correctly, and the practice required to attain this wisdom.

It may not be appropriate to ask how Chih-i would have responded to the famous Zen query "Does a dog have Buddha Nature?" After all, this question arose much later under quite different social and historical circumstances. But to venture a guess, he may have taken the "middle" way and answered "Yes and no," and if in a talkative mood would have continued with the standard Mādhyamika response, "Well, actually, yes, no, both yes and no, and neither yes nor no. In your case follow such-and-such a practice, and strive to realize the wonderful and subtle

27 Can this pattern be carried further into Christian theology and the idea of the Trinity: the father as reality, the son as incarnate wisdom, the holy spirit as the carrying out of activity in our daily lives? I leave that question for another occasion.

dharma of the Buddha." Or, in terms of the threefold truth he may have answered, "There is no Buddha Nature because everything is empty of svabhāvic-being and is subject to dependent coarising, yet there is Buddha Nature in the conventional sense that all beings have the potential to become Buddhas and (according to the *Lotus Sūtra*) are destined to do so; to realize the truth of both these statements is the Middle Way." Wordy and pedantic, perhaps, and not as striking as simply barking out *WU*, but it covers all the bases. And it draws one's attention back to the importance of correct *practice* to *realize* one's inherent/potential *Buddha Nature*.

Chinese Characters

a 湛然
b 金剛錍
c 三軌
d 眞性
e 観性
f 資成
g 正因
h 縁因
i 了因

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Index